SHOUT
SHARE
IT

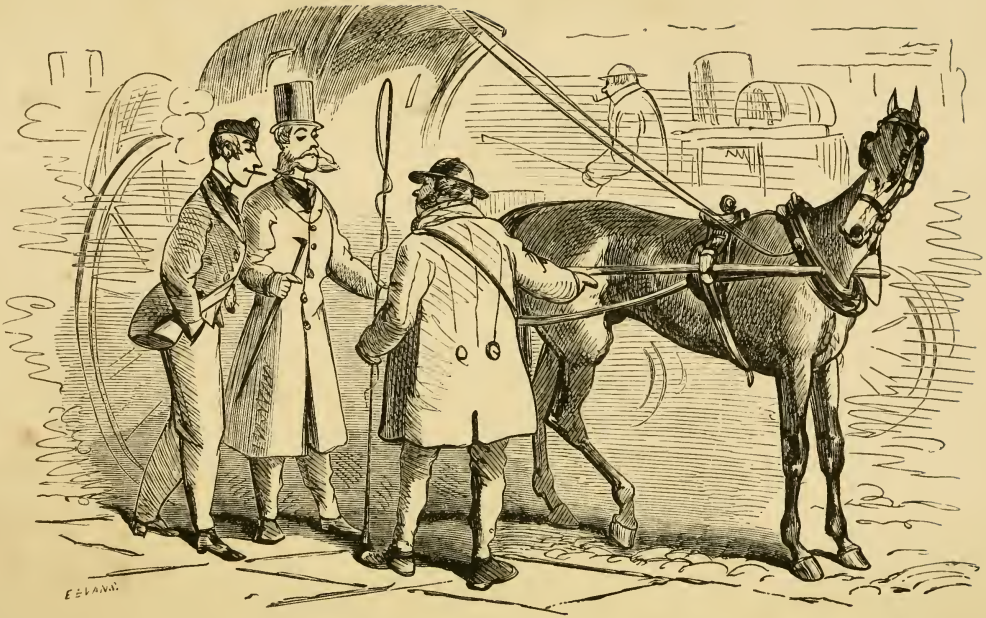
G5 10
0
D-4

THE PRISONERS IN GERMANY.

"Up to the end of September," says the *Staats Anzeiger*, "there had fallen into the hands of the German armies 3577 officers, 123,700 privates (in both cases unwounded men), 56 eagles, and 2218 guns (including 96 mitrailleuses). In October and November these numbers were increased to 10,037 officers, 303,842 privates, 112 eagles, and 4130 guns (170 of these being mitrailleuses). The former figures comprise the trophies captured at Sedan, Toul, Laon, and Strasburg; the latter include the 6000 officers and 150,000 men, besides 23,000 sick and wounded, taken at Metz, 5000 men at Schlestadt, 4000 at Verdun, 3500 in the engagements round Paris, 1500 captured by General Werder's Baden corps in the east, and 500 officers and 7700 men who were discharged (cured) from the hospitals and transferred to the depôts of prisoners. Fifty-six eagles were taken at Metz, the greater number of the eagles belonging to Marshal Bazaine's army having been destroyed just before the capitulation. The guns taken in October and November consisted of 1570 at Metz (including 72 mitrailleuses), 3 at Orleans, 123 at Soissons, 2 before Paris, 108 at Schlestadt, 5 in Fort Mortier, and 100 at Neu Breisach."

JOHN A. SEAVERNS

TUFTS UNIVERSITY LIBRARIES
3 9090 014 545 954
Mills, John, d ca. 1885.
The life of a racehorse.
Seaverns
PR
5021
M482
L5
1861z



WHAT I CAME TO AT LAST.

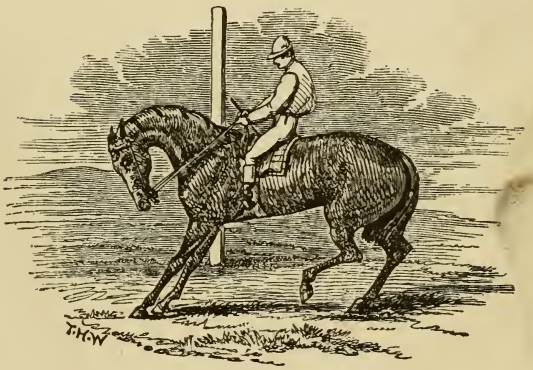
THE

LIFE OF A RACEHORSE.

BY

JOHN MILLS,

AUTHOR OF "THE OLD ENGLISH GENTLEMAN," "FLYERS OF THE HUNT," "THE BRIEFLESS BARRISTER," ETC., ETC.



RESTIVE AT THE POST.

LONDON:

WARD, LOCK AND TYLER, 158, FLEET STREET;

AND OF ALL BOOKSELLERS, AND AT THE RAILWAY STATIONS.

1865.

LONDON:
PRINTED BY WOODFALL AND KINDER,
MILFORD LANE, STRAND.

CONTENTS.

THE PADDOCK 7

THE DUMB JOCKEY 12

TOBY 17

MY FIRST JOURNEY 22

NEWMARKET 26

THE HEATH 32

THE FIRST SWEAT 38

THE TRIAL AND FIRST APPEARANCE IN PUBLIC 43

THE CRITERION 49

HOW TO MAKE A BOOK 53

THE PREPARATION FOR THE DERBY 59

THE BLUE RIBAND OF THE TURF 64

FATE'S TABLE IS TURNED 68

THE ROPING FOR THE ST. LEGER 72

THE SALE AT TATTERSALL'S 77

BY WHAT I DO I SHOW WHAT I COULD HAVE DONE 82

MY BREAK DOWN: ITS CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES 88

THE DRUG 94

MY PROVINCIAL TOUR 98

THE PAINTED BIT 102

THE FINISH 107

THE

LIFE OF A RACEHORSE.

CHAPTER I.

THE PADDOCK.

Ay, 'tis long ago since I stood by my dam's side, on a hot and bright May morning; and yet it seems but yesterday when we were together under the great chestnut tree, with its leafy branches throwing for yards around a deep and sombre shade, in the centre of our paddock. This is the earliest scene I can remember of my life—a life fraught with sorrowful changes of the past. Ay, 'tis long ago when many a man's fate was linked with mine; when upon my efforts hung success or defeat, joy or sorrow, hope or despair, the dicer's last throw for desperate fortune or irreparable ruin. When the most subtle plots were devised to garnish foul deceit with the semblance of fair honesty; when conflicting interests rendered human hearts little less callous than those of devils; when I, a high-mettled and pampered racehorse, ran to win or lose in accordance with the purpose to be served; when some eyed me with trust, some with suspicion, some with love, some with hate—but few without anxiety and dread. All this, however, was long ago, although it seems but yesterday.

I can see the old mare now, so gently switching her flanks with the point of her fine and silky tail that it would scarcely have brushed a fly from them. Her small and beautiful head

was held straight out, almost level with her shoulders; and although she blinked and winked in a lazy, listless, dreamy mood, an ear thrown back, while its fellow remained pricked stiffly forward, gave an indication that the buzz of a beetle's wing might cause her to leap from the ground like a stag from its lair. Upon her sleek, shot-silk coat, large full veins stood out like fibres upon a vine-leaf, and within them ran the untainted blood of centuries. Godolphin's mingled there, the only stock from which we trace the best and purest of our breed. Even now, I feel a spark glowing brightly within me, when I think of the root from which I sprung—worn-out, friendless, and forgotten as I am. But it was not always so, as my story, plainly told, shall tell.

"Well, Sir Digby, what do you think of the colt?" is the first question—even the first words—I can remember being applied to myself.

They were spoken by a long-waisted, diminutive man, dressed in the airy costume of a linen jacket, drab-coloured "knees," gaiters, and roomy, square-toed shoes. Round his short, thick throat—bearing a strong tendency to apoplexy—a snow-white roll of cambric was twisted in the form of a limp wisp; and in a knot, tied with scrupulous care, a plain gold pin of horse-shoe shape drew the observer's attention with unerring certainty. A badger-pied fur cap, stuck carelessly upon one side of his round head, gave him a jaunty, swaggering air, and this was somewhat increased by the way in which he stood, with both arms buried to the elbows in the depths of his breeches pockets, and his legs separated beyond the common order of division. The features of which his countenance was made up consisted of the ordinary ones belonging to his class, with the exception, perhaps, of a pair of small, gray, piercing eyes, placed obliquely in their sockets like those of a fox. These sharp, restless gray eyes, ever rolling from side to side, produced the striking impression that "our head groom" entertained a naturally quick perception of men and manners, combined with a familiar knowledge of the world, its myths

and mysteries. Clean and smoothly shaved, not the slightest stubble upon his chin or cheeks was visible, and a roll of pink flesh, lying over the edge of the cambric wisp, proved that he practised little self-denial in those good things which his master's bountiful board supplied.

"Well, Sir Digby," repeated he, jerking the badger-pied cap over one of his angular organs of vision, "what do ye think o' the colt?"

"It will save me infinite trouble *not* to think, Robert," replied the tall, slender, and gentleman-like figure by his side, drawing a cigar from his lips, and slowly twisting the outside leaf to a fine and taper point towards the end. "Give me your opinion."

"Ha!" exclaimed our head groom, diving, or trying to dive, his hands still deeper, and placing his legs still farther apart, "and I can give it, too, and no mistake. I've looked after more colt-foals and filly-foals than fall to the lot o' most men, let them be bred, born, brought up, live and die, in whatsomdever stables you can name. The first thing I was learned—the alphabet o' my edication, so to speak—was the points of a goodoss. I took to 'em, Sir Digby—as I've often heard my lamented deceased guv'nor say, with the tears o' pride a-biling over in his blessed eyes—as nat'rally as when a little sucker I took to my dear old dam's buzzum. He used to say—I mean the deceased guv'nor—that a real, gen*uine* judge o' the points of a goodoss must be born one. 'There's no drivin' the talent into him,' the lamented deceased once said of a summer's evening when a-knockin' the ashes out of his pipe—poor venerable file! he's nothin' more than a pinch of ashes himself now, Sir Digby—'it must come like blood from his thumb when pricked, Robert. You, my son, have that talent from your sire, and I from mine, as it was in the beginnin', and so on. We come into the world born head grooms—and all head, too—not your brush and curry-comb, p-s-h, wisp, and elbow-sweaters. No, Robert, we leave that to be done while *we* look on, and that's the tribute—if I may be allowed so to call it—which is paid to genius.'"

"Are you aware that I am getting frightfully fatigued with this very slow discourse?" inquired Sir Digby in a languid voice. "If my treacherous memory does not deceive me, you induced me to walk here at some inconvenience to see this colt. The purpose being served, I suppose I can return."

"He's the best shaped and finest for his age that my eyes ever fell upon," rejoined our head groom in a marked and emphatic voice.

"You surprise me!" returned Sir Digby, as he concluded, letting off a volley of small whiffs of smoke from his compressed lips; but neither the manner nor expression accompanying the words evinced the slightest astonishment.

"Ah, Sir Digby!" continued Robert, warming upon the subject, "if colt by Made Safe out of Dangerous by Fleece'em, dam Treachery by Nobbler, doesn't pull back some o' that money lent o' yours, *I* shall be surprised."

"Money lent?" echoed the baronet, now exhibiting some palpable symptoms of perplexity.

"Money lost is but money lent, with such a rising yearlin' as that," responded our head groom, pointing at me with a straightened finger. "He'll win ye somethin' better than a gold mine," continued he, "when fit to go to the post."

"Egad!" ejaculated my owner; for, perhaps, I ought to have said Sir Digby possessed the right of calling me his. "Egad!" repeated he, with a sudden energy of tone, "but I wish he was there at this precise moment. It would be remarkably convenient, Robert, *re*markably convenient."

"If he was mine," resumed our head groom, "he should'nt be there as soon as he will be."

"What do you mean?"

"I'd keep 'm for a good three-year-old stake, and not take the steel out of him too quickly. That's what *I* would do, Sir Digby."

"Now really," returned his master, with an air of deep vexation, "one might reasonably suppose you were perfectly unconscious of my total want of authority in these matters;

and yet you know, as well as myself, that Sellusall both claims and exercises the right of treating me only in the light of his breeder and breaker. As my trainer, he runs the horses that I place in his hands when and how he thinks fit. I have no voice in the proceeding; and whether this colt starts for the two-year-old or three-year-old stakes, both or neither, must entirely rest with him."

"I know that, Sir Digby, but I thought——"

"It is useless to bore me with the expression of your thoughts upon the subject," interrupted the baronet. "I have not even sufficient fortitude to listen to them."

"Very good, Sir Digby," said our head groom, with the resignation of a martyr, "then I'll keep 'em to myself. Co-op, dear, co-op," continued he, extending a hand for me to approach.

I instantly obeyed the summons, as he had always treated me with the greatest kindness, and rubbing my head against his breast, Robert voluntarily commenced a panegyric upon my disposition.

"He's sweeter-tempered than a kitten a month old," observed he, chafing my nose with the back of a hand, "and his playful ways put one in mind of a real Cosset."

"The colt looks a promising one, certainly," remarked my owner, as he now, for the first time, bent a scrutinising gaze upon me.

Our head groom drew a long breath between his teeth, and expressed the strong wish of being then and there bereft of vitality if I was not the most so he had ever seen.

"Good fore-legs," resumed Sir Digby, walking round me; "famous shoulders; nice head and neck; well ribbed-up loin; quarters deep and let down; capital thighs; big hocks, of the right stamp; with a barrel which tells of a constitution as sound as an acorn."

"The identical same, Sir Digby!" exclaimed Robert, delighted beyond description at the discovery of my "points" by his master. "The identical same, Sir Digby!"

"We must name this young flyer," remarked my owner,

still keeping a fixed look upon me, and I remember that he now appeared to forget his cigar, for he let it smoulder out, and at length dropt the unconsumed end at his feet.

"He deserves a good un," said our head groom.

"You think he will pull back some of that which has——" and Sir Digby expressed the conclusion of the sentence by slightly puffing the tips of his gloved fingers.

"I do, Sir Digby."

"Then we will call him Sheet Anchor," returned the baronet; "and may he prove to be mine."

Such is the earliest reminiscence that I have of my eventful history.

CHAPTER II.

THE DUMB JOCKEY.

As I had always been accustomed to be "handled" by our head groom, it gave me but little annoyance to have a plain, thick bit put into my mouth one morning, particularly as he observed the most gentle care in preventing all unnecessary annoyance. I did not much like the ordeal to which my untutored gums were subjected; but Robert patted my neck, and soothed the irritability caused by this first check between my jaws, in a way which rarely fails to obtain complete mastership over us, when rough or unkind usage only renders our opposition naturally stronger. It would be as well to be borne in mind, perhaps, by all who exercise any control over us, that that which is frequently ascribed to "bad temper," may be far more correctly traced to the innate apprehension of danger so predominant in our truly nervous systems. When we either kick, shy, plunge, rear, or run away, the chances are twenty to one that the primary cause is "fear." We possess memories of a truly tenacious kind; and anything which has once proved a source of positive terror to us we rarely forget, and, occasionally, never forgive. But it should be remembered that we are not to be

blamed, and consequently ought not to be punished, for this acute sensitiveness. Like the hare, the impulse of our nature is to flee from that which terrifies us. If our physical powers of attack and defence be great, yet still we are denied the necessary courage to render them effective, otherwise it would frequently go hard indeed with those who exercise little moderation in applying the whip and spur to the exhausted but willing horse.

Few, very few, however, pay the slightest attention to our dispositions. Let the antipathy be never so great—let the terror be insurmountable in spite of constant association with the cause—and the "bad-tempered, vicious brute" had better be shot than condemned to the living death of passing from the hands of one savage to those of another.

Fortunately for me, and equally so for the whole of the young stock which he superintended, Robert made it his study to become thoroughly acquainted with our several mixtures of contrary qualities. His rule was not the fixed one of treating all alike; but upon knowing what we were, from his own observation, he adopted whatever seemed best to the particular case. If a colt proved more than usually awkward, shy, or timid, our head groom would stand close by, whistling by the hour together; and what with giving him a carrot or two, and coaxing him with his "co-op, lad, co-op; so, there, gently!" at last win him over to do just what he pleased. With the refractory he was stern, patient, and persevering, but never cruel. In teaching us the rudiments of our education, however, Robert would be master; and opposition to his mandates merely entailed the annoyance and trouble of our being compelled to repeat the task until he was satisfied with the attempt.

At the expiration of a short period, and when my mouth had become familiarised to the bit, I had a crossed piece of wood, called a "dumb jockey," strapped upon my back. I forget at this moment whether the effect of the "dumb jockey" frightened me, as Robert proceeded to lead me across a broad, undulated park, in which a herd of deer was browsing, or

whether the unpleasant sensations caused me to entertain the impulse of getting rid of my light burthen; but certain it is, that with a sudden bound, and fling of my heels, I snapped the girth, and sent the "dumb jockey" flying like a stone from a sling. Having accomplished this feat, much to my own satisfaction, I stood quietly, and looked at our head groom in the vain hope of receiving some applause for the achievement. To my surprise, however, he wore a grave and thoughtful air.

"That's nasty," observed he, shaking the badger-pied cap; "very nasty! If you've got that trick in your marrer, I'll be blessed if there won't be soon a lot o' precious necks broke at Newmarket. We shall have to look round for a supply o' boys —a regular supply o' boys kept a-purpose."

From the serious expression upon his face I was not quite certain but that I might meet with a degree of punishment proportionate to what I now discovered to be the offence, and, straining upon the rein with which Robert held me, I dragged him for some yards in my backward movement.

His voice, however, assured me that I had nothing to dread at his hands; and we were soon again upon our usual terms of friendship and good-will.

"Before giving ye another such lesson," said our head groom, leading me again towards the stable I had just quitted, "before giving ye another such lesson," repeated he slowly, "I'll take a little o' that caper-an-kick out o' ye with a few drachms of aloes, my lad. It's a murrain sight easier to get a knack o' bucking boys and saddles into the middle o' the next fortnight than forgetting how to do it, I know. Besides which, boys in time must become ske-arce; and what should we do then, I'd like to be informed by the earliest post?"

At this moment I saw Sir Digby approaching in the distance, and, Robert perceiving him also, we stood waiting for his arrival.

"Anything amiss with the colt?" inquired he, with an expression of anxiety upon his pale, handsome, but deeply-lined features.

"Not exactly amiss, Sir Digby," replied our head groom, diving his unemployed hand into one of the sacks with which his capacious drab knee-breeches were furnished. "Not exactly amiss, Sir Digby," replied he, separating his remarkably short legs by a full yard; "but he's got the trick o' the old mare in'm, as sure as I am a sinner, although I could never bring my mind to think a miserable one."

"Then we shall never be able to depend upon him," rejoined Sir Digby, in a mortified tone. "His dam was properly called Dangerous, for it was always even betting whether she would start, or buck her jockey clean from her back, like a shuttlecock from the stroke of a battledore."

"Ha!" ejaculated Robert, bending a fixed gaze upon the topmast twig of a neighbouring tree, "I think I feel myself now a-goin' to grass in the shape of a cocked hat. There's scarcely a bone in my skin, Sir Digby," continued he, with great apparent satisfaction at the reminiscence, "but what the old mare broke at one time or another."

"She certainly was anything but considerate to you," observed his master.

"And yet, to say I'd ridden such a flyer," returned our head groom, with the crimson in his cheeks becoming many shades brighter, "I'd a broken my precious neck as short as a carrot, Sir Digby. I'm a-gettin' into the wale o' years; but my feelin's," and Robert gave a kind of double knock just under the conspicuous gold horse-shoe in his cravat, "are as green as turnip-tops. We've got the old pink in the seedlin'," continued he, extending the palm of an open hand towards me as he spoke. "There he stands, with her wirtues and her wices, but——" our head groom made a most effective pause, and then added, with particular emphasis,——"a *race*-oss."

"But a dangerous one, remember," remarked my owner, smiling.

"That's his blood," responded Robert; "and it's wonderful what runs in blood, 'specially in thorough-breds. I've seen the same ways, the same faults, the same stones—so to

speak—in the same cherries, from sire and dam to son and daughter, from generation to generation. This has made me sometimes think, Sir Digby," and our head groom drew in a long breath which whistled between his teeth, before completing the sentence,—"this makes me sometimes think, Sir Digby, there may be more in breedin' than we know of."

"That equally applies to most, if not to all things, Robert," replied Sir Digby, in a soft, reflective voice.

"It may, for aught I can tell," resumed our head groom; "but all I know about is osses; and as my wenerable old steel file of a guv'nor—there was no soft metal in *him*, Sir Digby—used for to say, speak about nothin' yer do'nt understand. If it's pigs, let's have pigs; if cabbages, give us cabbages; if poultry, stick to yer ducks and chickens; but don't mix up toolips and 'otus grapes with 'em at the same time. That's what *he* said, Sir Digby, and his words lie here," continued Robert, tapping the third button of his linen jacket, "like pebbles in a brook."

"You think the colt inherits the great fault of his dam?" said my owner, interrogatively.

Robert jerked the badger-pied cap over one eye, stretched a hand and arm into the fathomless depths of a pocket, and, widening the distance of his square-toed shoes by a full inch laconically replied, "*I* do."

"That one fault cost me thirty thousand pounds."

"It's a great deal o' money, Sir Digby."

"More than I mean to risk again."

"Nothing venture, nothing win," returned our head groom glancing askance at Sir Digby.

"I'm in great doubt whether I will even put the colt in training," observed the baronet, thoughtfully.

Robert started, as if the bullet had hit him.

"Not put him into trainin', Sir Digby!" exclaimed he, with his eyes glistening like an angry ferret's.

"So I said," coolly replied my owner, as he drew himself up and folded his arms across his breast. "So I mean."

"Then you'll lose——"

An impatient wave of Sir Digby's hand checked the conclusion of the sentence.

"*That* I have done since I was possessed of anything to part withal," rejoined his master. "If I continue to lose," added he, turning upon his heel, "the future will be but a profitless reflection of the past."

CHAPTER III.

TOBY.

SOME time before the rudiments of my "breaking in" were completed, I learned that Sir Digby's scruples, concerning the policy of putting me into training, had been overcome, and that it was determined I should be on my way to Newmarket in the course of a few weeks. My strength and spirits increased daily under the judicious and watchful care I met with at the hands of our head groom; but with my improvement in condition I felt my temper becoming far more irritable, and that which formerly I should have taken but little notice of, now excited me to an extent scarcely to be described. Any one I did not know, or anything unusual coming within range of my heels, I could scarcely refrain from kicking with full force and a ready will. An unexpected sound startled me, and the quick step of a horse, whether far or near, made me fret, and feel disposed to break away from the hand which held me. Even the sharp closing of the door of my box caused me to spring, and I could scarcely submit to be "rubbed down," by the lad appointed to confine his attentions to my wants and comforts.

"The old blood," remarked Robert, superintending one of my early matin dressings. "The old blood," repeated he. "Be tender with him, Harry, and careful o' yourself. He doesn't mean mischief; but if he should catch ye a wipe in his play there's no answerin' for it's not bein' a rough-un."

"I don't think he'd 'urt me or the cat, sir," quickly replied

the boy, stopping in the act of "hand-rubbing" the pastern joint of my off foreleg, and glancing sideways at Robert as he spoke.

"Has he taken a great fancy to Toby, then?" inquired our head groom.

"A fancy?" repeated Harry, rising from a kneeling position, and placing his arms a-kimbo. "Strike-me lucky," continued he, "if ever I seed such a fancy, Mr. Top! Why, he'll play with the cat, sir, just for all the same as a big babby would. Here, Toby, old feller, where are yer?"

Toby, who was cozily curled up in a dark, snug corner, just beneath my manger, woke at the summons for his presence, and gave a "me-u-ow," which always sounded as if he suffered from a constitutional and perpetual bad cold, accompanied by great hoarseness and catarrh.

"I knew he wasn't far off," said Harry; and, thrusting a hand among the depths of the straw, he dragged Toby by the neck from his retreat, and dropped him lightly on my quarters.

Poor Toby! His points and proportions in kittenhood had been sadly mutilated by Harry's trimming-scissors, not even the remotest stump of a tail being visible, and his ears had been cropped so closely that it was impossible to see he ever possessed a pair. Sleek, fat, and black as jet, Toby might, had his natural gifts been permitted to remain, have proved a handsome specimen of his race; but his artificial appearance exhibited a strong amalgamation of the "slang" and ridiculous.

I am, perhaps, not at a greater loss than my masters for the causes of my likings or dislikings; but, upon taking possession of my box, Toby gave me a welcome by jumping into the manger, and, patting my nose gently with his paws, purred an offer of good fellowship which I embraced. From my acquaintanceship with Toby, I soon—for my temperament was more than warm—began to love him; and except when watching for a felon mouse, or engaged in some amorous dalliance, he was generally on my back, in my manger, or just under it. And so it was that I and Toby cemented a long and lasting friendship.

"Harry," said Robert Top, with the habitual jerk of the badger-pied cap over one of his sloping organs of sight, and burying his arms far above the elbows in the deep pockets of his drab knee-breeches,—"Harry," repeated he, stretching his legs wide apart, "that's a bless-ed symptom of jolly good luck, lad. I'm not an old 'ooman; far from it; but a black fee*line* taking to a oss like that, tells me we shall have luck with'm, lad, and the cream o' luck, too."

"Hope we may, sir," replied Harry, again dropping upon his knees, and resuming his labours at my legs.

Harry Dale, you are now a "man," in the comprehensive sense which the world puts upon that definition. You are rich, and I, "a screw," as I am called, was the stepping-stone to your footing. The time has been when you were uncared for, and unheeded as I am—when you were a round-faced, red-cheeked stable boy, and I "the crack" of that stable, and the almost worshipped favourite of thousands, ay, and tens of thousands—when to be my attendant was your honour. That day was mine; this is yours.

"On Monday next, Harry," remarked our head groom, removing Toby from my back, where he was sitting in the act of cleaning his face in the primitive method cats usually adopt at their toilet,—"on Monday next," repeated he, caressing Toby most affectionately, "we shall start with the colts for Newmarket, and you will look after this one there as you have done here."

"Yessir," responded Harry, stopping for a moment his "t-s-h—p-s-h," as he rubbed away at my legs.

"Toby shall go with us," continued Mr. Top, "and take up his quarters there also; and you'll pay partic'lar attention, Harry, whensomdever the colt shows signs o' temper, to give him the cat to play with. He'll want humourin', Harry, as he trains on,—and, mind my words, a good deal o' temper, in men and osses, depends on the way in which they're humoured, Most of us have a Toby o' some sort or another; and if so be people would give theirselves the trouble o' finding our Tobys

out, Harry—I say it as a bless-ed truth—there wouldn't be such a deal o' boltin', kickin', rearin', swervin', shyin', buckin', *and* sight o' breakdowns as we see with our precious eyes a'most every day we live."

"T-s-h—p-s-h!" spluttered Harry Dale.

"You're a smart lad," resumed Robert, slightly widening the distance between his legs as he spoke; "and if so be ye keep your peepers well to the keyholes o' the world, Harry, may I be kicked to death by grasshoppers but you'll be a credit to *me!* and it takes something to do that, remember, as the head o' the Top family."

To this double-edged compliment Harry respectfully pulled the straight piece of dark shining brown hair upon his forehead, which was cultivated to grow in the exact form of a duck's tail.

"But to have anythin' but a blank in the raffle," continued Robert, sententiously, "you must do what I tell ye, Harry, say what I tell ye, and do nothin', and say nothin', I tell ye not to do or say."

"Yessir," responded Harry, giving the duck's tail another pull.

"Very good," returned Mr. Top, making an effort to get his hands and arms an inch or two deeper. "Very good," repeated he, as if pleased with the prompt acquiescence; "then just prick your ears for'ard, and take a lesson of *soo*perior quality."

Harry quitted his task temporarily, but remained upon his knees during Mr. Top's address.

"I've a notion," commenced he, placing his head at an acute angle, "that we've an out-an-out flyer in this colt, Harry; and, barrin' accident, he will pull us off some o' those good things o' which our stable's been much in want, longer than it's altogether pleasant to think of. Now Sellusall, Harry," continued our head groom, in a slow, deliberate tone, "is one o' those common Christians as may be met with a'most as plentiful as blackberries in autumn, that thinks an' cares only about

featherin' his own precious nest. If so be he can do that, and he's in no way nice, Harry, whether they're pigeons or rooks, so long as they *are* feathers," continued Mr. Robert Top, with a deliberate wink of his left angular organ of vision; "I say, if so be he can do that, John Sellusall is in no way nice as to what birds are plucked; it's my opinion, Harry, he'd put his own mother in the hole if it came to extremities. With my information, therefore, of John Sellusall's notions of friendship, I'm not goin' to put much faith in that cockboat. Now, whatever you may become by-an'-by, Harry, is one thing; what you are's another. At the present moment you're as verdant as any young pea this mornin' gathered, and for a time—long or short, as the case may be, but only for a time, Harry—I can put all the trust I want to be carried in your basket o' greens. You could'nt come the artful with me if ye would, and I'm free to say, as I think, wouldn't if ye could. But a trainin'-stable and this are different schools, lad. We don't become close connections o' the Sellusalls at once, Harry, head-over-tip. The movement's a slow one; but as flints become smoother and bright from the rollin' and washin' o' the tide, so we are rubbed, by degrees, into somethin' a'most as tough as pewter, and harder than crockery."

Harry Dale continued in the same meek position upon his knees, and, at the conclusion of the sentence, raised a finger and thumb, and mechanically pinched the duck's tail.

"Not if you were a Top, Harry, by Robert Top, dam Elizabeth by William, dam Lucy, own sister to Maryanne, by Thomas Top, would I trust ye, when master o' the dodges of a Sellusall," said our head groom, with marked emphasis; "but your apprenticeship has not begun yet."

Harry made another appeal to his top-knot in unbroken silence.

"I shall, therefore, depend on your sendin' me," resumed Robert, "a true an' partic'lar account of what this colt's doin'. I want to know when he's in strong work, when moderate, and when out; who leads'm in his gallops, how he goes, the distances

he takes his spins, when he's corky, and when the reverse. I want to know when he feeds well, and when he's off his feed; when he's in physic, and what for. I want to know if a screw's loose, and where, if it lies in your overalls to tell me, Harry; but whatever you say, let it be what you *know*. I can guess better than you."

"Yessir," briefly coincided Harry, with a tendency of a finger and thumb to the duck's tail.

"What amount o' savin's may you have by ye?" inquired our head groom.

"Three-pun-ten, sir," replied Harry, with the confidence of a capitalist.

"It's more than many can call their own who go to Newmarket and bet as if the Bank o' England was a prop to fall back upon," remarked Robert. "Brass, however, often wears a brighter face than gold," continued he, "as you'll find out sooner than you are now aware of, Harry; but do as I tell ye, and that three-pound-ten shall——"

Harry Dale lifted his light gray, restless eyes, and dropped a jaw, as Mr. Top made an effective pause in the sentence—"be your chink to the shutter to all in the ring," added he.

Harry Dale,—that day was mine: this is yours.

CHAPTER IV.

MY FIRST JOURNEY.

At cockcrow—when the east was just tinged with the first light of an early summer's morning—Mr. Top entered my box, accompanied by Harry Dale. Placing one hand across my nose, our head groom rubbed my head and neck with the other as he pressed them fondly to his breast, saying as he did so, "I'm a-goin' to lose ye, lad. This day may be counted as the beginnin' o' your bless-ed ups an' downs, ins an' outs, squares, crosses, all round my hat, pumpkin to-day, squash to-morrow, minnow an'

salmon, gold an' gammon! Yes, my pink o' pinks," continued he, "a raceoss, like a man, is valer'd accordin' to his success. If he pulls through, well an' good! If he doesn't, why in that case, my bo-o-y, the pace he'll be driven to the dogs is somethin' faster than a common style o' canter. I'm a-goin' to lose ye, lad," repeated Mr. Top, reflectively. "The work begun in the rough has now to be rounded off at the corners, an', by-an'-by, the varnish put on—the finishin' touches, so to speak. They'll bring ye out then, lad," continued he, "for the *Cri*terion; and I, your old cock chicken of a nurse, will be among the proudest o' the land to see ye go to the post, jump off with the lead, make all the runnin', cut down the lot, an' win, hard held, just as ye like. That'll be the way, in which he'll win the *Cri*terion, Harry, or I'm not a prophet in 'orseflesh."

"Yessir," responded Harry, making, as was his wont, a respectful pull at the perpendicular duck's tail.

"We mustn't lose more time, though," continued Robert. "As soon as they've eaten a feed o' corn, Harry, we'll be upon the road with 'em; for the less wheels we meet or pass the better, I know. You're so handy with them heels o' yours, ad," continued he, giving me a playful smack upon the quarter, "so very handy that I shall feel eight-stun-seven the lighter when I've delivered ye safe an' sound into the hands of John Sellusall. Now, Harry, be alive."

Of a naturally quick and mercurial temperature, Harry Dale no sooner received this stimulant to his energies, than he exhibited a degree of sprightliness not dissimilar to a parched pea upon a drum-head. In a twinkling of something too quick to be seen, my water and corn were brought, I was rubbed down, Toby was thrust into a small covered basket which had been prepared for his reception; a small, round, hard bundle, the outward appearance of which was a blue and white cotton handkerchief—for Harry Dale's luggage and personal effects at that time consisted of a truly limited assortment—met with its proprietor's intentions in being conveniently slung upon a disengaged elbow; a cap, without the originality of Mr. Top's, but

bearing a close resemblance to the badger-pied, was jerked over the duck's tail, and he forthwith announced to me and the large black spider, who tenanted a dusty web sprinkled with hay seeds in a lofty corner of my box, that he was "fit as a fiddle."

"Bobby Topsawyer," said he, irreverently referring to our head groom in his temporary absence, "shan't say I am troubled with the slows when I'm just about bein' turned over from his 'ands into our trainer's. How I'll take the shine out o' their blacking at Newmarket!" continued he, making an extraordinary imitation of Mr. Top's mannerism when speaking of his late honoured parent or his own peculiar accomplishments. "When it comes to trottin'-out the donkey," said Harry, with his eyes fixed on the ceiling immediately above his head, his arms crossed upon his bosom, and his short bandy legs stretched asunder, "what a stepper mine 'll be!"

Years, long years, have come and gone since then; but in the mirror of the past, Harry Dale, I can see you as you stood on that memorable morning of my chequered life, with no one and no thing but me and the spider as witnesses of your bearing. Instead of the pale and bloodless cheek which now, as a man of care, although of wealth, salutes your glass, your face was ruddy with health, Harry Dale, and in your clear blue eyes a love of mischief lurked, which, had it been confined to the tricks of boyhood, might have rendered the difficulties of a certain account to be settled far less onerous. Humble as was your attire, nothing could be neater than the drab cloth gaiter, with its row of mother-of-pearl buttons, encompassing your little wiry leg, and the white linen jacket extending to your knees—and leaving, from its length, the impression that the design, originally, was for one whose stature was at least double your own—might have been exhibited as a pattern for the most vainglorious of stable-boys. The eminently successful attempt to copy the attire of Mr. Top was most striking, perhaps, in the hastily adjusted cravat; for the roll of bleached cambric encircling Harry's throat, even to the horse-shoe pin just beneath the square knot, looked its genuine prototype in fold and crease.

"Has he eaten his corn?" inquired our head groom, making a sudden appearance at the door of my box.

"Yessir," sharply responded my youthful attendant, "and is licking the crib for more."

"Ha!" ejaculated Mr. Top, "he's a rare feeder; but clap on the bridle, Harry; for we must be movin'."

In a few seconds this order was obeyed, and as I turned to quit for ever the earliest home of my colthood, I glanced at the old black spider in his dusty web, and wondered if he looked at me with the same strange feeling of regret that we never should meet again.

The morning mist hung upon tree and flower as I stepped from the door of my box into the well-kept gravel yard, forming a square by the capacious range of adjacent stabling. There were two besides myself, prepared for the same journey; and I admit that I was not a little proud to find them left to the solitude of the lads who stood at their heads, while an eager group formed about me as, with head erect, I crossed the threshold, and neither man nor boy, in the service of Sir Digby, but crowded round to take a parting view of the anticipated flyer of his year.

"If he can stand the goin' through the sieve," said one in a suppressed tone—for Mr. Robert Top was a strict disciplinarian, and submitted to nothing like a liberty in an underling—"if he can stand the goin' through the sieve," repeated he, with a hand screening the motion of his lips, "he'll stagger the layers agin' him, Tummas."

"He's the raspin'est colt *I* ever put eyes on," replied "Tummas," who supported the character of a venerable strapper, the qualifications for which were unexceptionably spoken of by our head groom with a sneer of profound contempt; "and if it comes to sellin' the buttons off my precious Sunday shirt, I'll stick it on, James, as thick as treacle."

"Those hind legs," remarked another of the establishment, "are hung as if they wanted to get before."

"And if it comes too near to be agreeable," observed a

shrewd youth with a pair of small, red ferrety eyes, "why his long snakish neck will shove his nose in first."

Mr. Robert Top now mounted the hack assigned for his special use, and, leading the way out of the great gates, swung creaking back upon their hinges, I, conducted by Harry Dale, followed him, while the rear was brought up by the two colts, similarly guided as myself.

It would be an injustice to our head groom not to describe him minutely, when mounted upon the small, closely-knit, wiry, and rather "varmint"-looking roan cob who invariably bore him when a transit of his body beyond Sir Digby's domain became either a matter of business or recreation. Instead of the badger-pied cap, a perfectly round hat, with an exceedingly narrow brim, surmounted his brow; and a brown cut-away coat, fastened by a single button across the breast, gave a "puff" to the snowy wisp of a cravat which stuck prominently forth, like the inflated crop of a pouter pigeon. The nether part of his person was attired, the seasons round, in the same undeviating livery of drab cloth breeches and gaiters, the only change being in the last delivered from the tailor's, and those preceding. A pair of speckless doeskin gloves, and a straight cutting whip, completed Mr. Robert Top's personal appearance, as he showed the way on our road to Newmarket.

CHAPTER V.

NEWMARKET.

A DULL, spiritless, ghostly place is Newmarket. Instead of the excitement, bustle, and din which generally attend the periodical race meetings within the belt of merry England, let the stake be never so large, the company never so great, and there is the same quiet, subdued "business" air in and around Newmarket. There is no fun on the heath, no frolic in the town. Neither drum nor trumpet, "ear-piercing fife," unfurled banners,

peripatetic minstrels of Afric lays, elastic-limbed athletes, hook-nosed venders of the questionable Havannah, supplicants for prompt relief from pressing exigencies, or comfortable parties out for the day, are to be found at Newmarket on the day of a heart-stirring, glorious race. The hotels and inns, of which there are too many to enumerate without the assistance of a ready reckoner, are full on certain occasions, and the Rutland Arms assumes a haughty bearing over the White Horse; but the White Horse puts his near fore foot to his nostrils, and winks like the late lamented John Reeve, at Rutland's arrogance. As for the shops, nobody was ever seen entering one, and whether the rents, rates, and taxes are paid from the net profit, or sunk capital of the eminently respectable proprietors, is a matter, perhaps, of little more immediate concern to themselves than the public. The object, however, of keeping a shop at Newmarket is veiled by a mist of impenetrable density.

No incident, that I can remember, worthy of particular notice occurred on the road. Mr. Top was watchful in the extreme as he preceded us by some yards; and whenever anything either approached, or was about to pass at a rapid pace, he would raise his round hat high above his head, and by signs and gestures prevented what might, otherwise, have caused terror in the young stock under his careful guidance and protection. By easy stages, and at a gentle walk, we at length entered that well-known town which for hundreds of years has been the focus of the enlarged and enlarging racing world. After going, as I believe, down the main street for a considerable distance, we turned a somewhat short angular corner to the right, and in a few minutes passed the entrance to a compact range of buildings, which I soon discovered to be in the occupation of Sir Digby's trainer, John Sellusall.

"Well, Robert," exclaimed a neatly-dressed, closely-shaved man, emerging from a stable-door, as we were brought to a standstill in the well-kept gravel yard, "what have you got here?" and as he spoke he seemed to measure our forms from heel to head at a single glance.

"If I don't tell ye," replied Robert, shaking the stirrup from his right foot, preparatory to dismounting from the roan cob, and looking askance at the questioner, "ye'll find out, mayhap, as soon as if I did."

"Wary, as of old, eh?" rejoined the other, with the mechanical laugh of a statue, which exhibited a row of teeth as even as a shark's; but I noticed that his pale, dull, and almost colourless eyes were measuring me inch by inch. "Wary, as of old, eh?" repeated he.

"Not partic'lar so," returned Mr. Top, as he turned his body from the saddle, and occupied a perpendicular position upon the ground.

"That's a likely-looking colt," observed the stranger, after a short pause, still keeping his eyes fixed upon me.

"Is he?" briefly responded our head groom, tapping his legs with the straight cutting whip in a manner of careless and complete indifference.

"In some respects, at least," added the stranger, reservedly, "if not in all."

"We look, you know, for information from *you*, Mr. Sellusall," said Robert with an unusual glisten in his fox-like organs of vision. "What may be that colt's particular respects, sir, which don't quite come up to the standard o' your fancy?"

"I'll speak of them presently," was the reply of him who, I now learned, was our trainer, John Sellusall. "Spanky," continued he, raising his voice, "Spanky, where the devil are ye?"

"Here, sir," returned a voice loudly, which, from the muffled sound, seemed to come from some far removed box or stall, with several doors closed upon its approaches. "Here, sir," repeated the voice, and at the same moment an individual made his appearance, from a neighbouring outlet, somewhat short of breath, and flushed in manner.

"Spanky," said Mr. Sellusall, in his habitual authoritative tone and manner, "put that colt in box number one."

"Oh!" exclaimed Robert, with a jerk of his round hat, as

he buried his arms in the pockets of his breeches, and stood with the varmint-looking cob's reins slung carelessly on an elbow. "And so he's to go in box number one, is he? Well, that's singular, that is!"

"Why so?" inquired the trainer.

Mr. Top, however, became so absorbed in thought that he paid no attention to the question; and the last I saw of him that day was as he stood in his favourite attitude, silently watching me led to a lead-coloured door, on which was conspicuously painted in a white ring, No. 1.

My box bore a close resemblance to the one I had quitted just three days before. Large, well-ventilated, and the walls boarded with oak to nearly six feet in height, with a crib and rack conveniently placed in one corner. I had no reason to feel dissatisfied with my new quarters; and as Harry and Toby accompanied me, I took possession of them with a light heart and contented spirit.

"I s'pose you know who *I* am?" said the individual summoned to Mr. Sellusall's presence by the name of Spanky, as he closed the door of the box, and strode towards Harry through the litter. "I s'pose you know who *I* am?" repeated he.

My impression is, that if Harry Dale did not positively know, he could have given a remarkably shrewd guess; but in rather an off-hand, flippant manner, he professed entire ignorance of the pedigree of Spanky, by seriously asking him "who was his mother?" and without pausing for a reply, followed up the interrogative by an energetic declaration that he knew nothing—and consequently would keep it a profound secret—of his family history or personal conduct, notoriously objectionable as both might be, and, possibly, matters of history in the Newgate Calendar.

"Well!" returned Spanky, staring at Harry as a cat sometimes eyes a mouse before making a final spring—"if this isn't a pretty go by way of a beginning, I should like to know what is?"

"There's nothing like a good start," rejoined Harry, pre-

tending to be busily occupied about me, but from the roguish twinkle in his eyes I could perceive that his thoughts were still occupied in taking "a rise" out of Spanky. "There's nothing like a good start," repeated he; "jump off as the flag drops, take the lead, keep it, and win in a common trot. That's the way to do it!"

"Now I tell you what it is, my fine feller," said Spanky, placing his knuckles upon his hips, and looking from the compressed state of his lips and flushed cheeks, that his indignation had been whipped to a froth, "this innercence won't do for me. I'm head lad in this stable, and have the ordering and licking o' the whole lot o' lads under me. I get my orders from master, you get yourn from me; and if so be hisn an't o-beyed, just as he gave 'em, he kicks me, and I kicks you. Do ye understand?"

Harry thought it advisable not to assume a lengthened ignorance, which sat uneasily upon him from the first, and admitted that he was no longer blind to the responsibilities and deference due to Spanky's office.

This well-timed admission soothed the irritability of my attendant's monitor, and he continued:—

"You don't come from a bad school. Robert Top knows what the dooties of a lad are, and I've no doubt he's kept your toe to the crease, my fine feller. But belonging to the family of the Sharps, I see, I'll take amazing care you haven't a single peg to hang a shirk on."

"Thankee, sir," replied Harry, with doubtful politeness, as he raised a finger and thumb in the direction of the duck's tail.

Spanky's face bore a deeper crimson at this suspicious acknowledgment, and he again measured Harry with a severe aspect, and, for a few seconds, in unbroken silence.

During the temporary pause, perhaps I cannot fill up the gap better than by giving a personal description of Spanky. The capacity of head lad conveys no criterion of the age of the official—as, once head lad, such he will remain, perhaps, to the last day of a prolonged existence. Now, although far from

exhibiting the autumnal tint of the sere and yellow leaf of life, Spanky was anything but a boy. Thirty winters might have been numbered with the past since his entrance into this world of trials, and he showed the wear and tear of quite that period, together with the friction of minor causes. John Sellusall's sharp, strict discipline, probably, might be enumerated as one. Spanky's features were as lean and fine-drawn as a greyhound's. Nothing but a thick sprinkling of freckles was to be seen where beard and whiskers generally leave signs of their whereabouts; and his high cheek-bones, and sunken, fishy eyes, fringed with strongly-marked, ginger-coloured arches, assisted in the making up of a countenance far from prepossessing. The end—the positive terminus of a nose, Spanky still claimed as his own; but, from the ill-fated kick of a colt he was dressing, in the hey-day of youth, the bridge and cartilage were rendered flat as a muffin. Beneath a rifle-green cloth cap, worn extremely forward on the head, a crop, closely cut, of light sandy hair was visible; and such was the shortness of the stubble that nothing less effective than a pair of pinchers could have taken hold of any quantity. Like his face, Spanky's figure was without an atom of superfluous flesh; and as he stood in the ordinary costume of baggy breeches and gaiters, striped canary and white waistcoat, reaching nearly to his knees, with flaps to the wide pockets, and sleeves buttoning closely to the wrists, the respective articles looked as if they would have fitted a clothes-horse quite as well. One, however, not yet mentioned, deserves more than ordinary attention, and that was Spanky's shirt-collar. Rounded off at the corners stiff as a board, white, high, and creaseless, Spanky appeared continually looking from between a pair of patent blinkers. Comfort there could be none in Spanky's shirt-collar, but of pride there was an unlimited quantity; and the bright blue bird's-eye cravat, tied with scrupulous care beneath, doubtlessly gave him an important bearing, which it is the stable policy of a head lad to assume.

The pause—oh, that all head lads could pause at such

moments!—enabled Spanky to take up the thread of his address; and settling his head between the blinkers, he thus continued:—

"The rules of our stable are these, my fine feller. You'll have to be with this colt by five o'clock i' the morning till further notice. First of all, you'll rack his 'ed up, clean out his crib, and if so be he's left any of his 'ay or corn, you'll put it in that corner there, where I may see it, without remark. You'll then give him six go-downs of water, neither more nor less, and then a feed o' corn. Then you'll shake up the litter, putting what's to be kept in them corners, and take away the rest; but wasting straw in our stable is a certain licking, and no mistake. You'll then sweep up clean, and afterwards shake a little of the litter down, being careful that it's none 'o the worst. Then wisp his hocks and thighs over, and if he shows any stains anywhere, sponge 'em off, my fine feller, so Mr. Sellusall can't see where they was, if you'd take my advice," added Spanky with a dry, short cough. "You'll then put on his clothing," resumed he, "which will be reg'lated in accordance with the exercise or work he's got to take or do; then put on your saddle, and draw your girths slack. Then look to his feet, brush his legs, sponge 'em, and polish off with a dry rubber."

Spanky, strange to relate, now began to whistle, with variations of his own—

"In the days that we went gipsying, a long time ago."

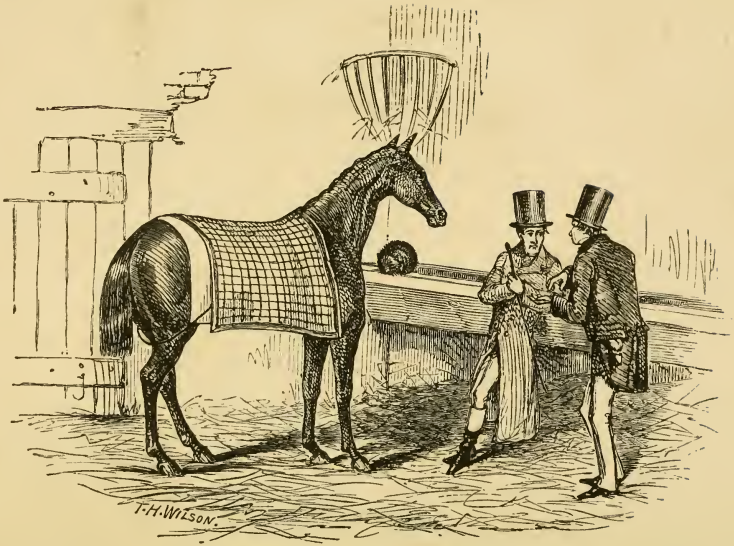
"What then, sir?" inquired Harry, with a knowing look.

"Go to your breakfast," replied Spanky, coolly turning upon his heel.

CHAPTER VI.

THE HEATH.

The following morning Harry was in my box by the time the lark had shaken the dew-drops from her wings, and the directions given him by Spanky were carried out with the



A PROFESSIONAL CONSULTATION IN MY STABLE.

utmost strictness. As he was about quitting me, I suppose to complete the concluding part of the lesson he received under the dictatorship of the head lad, John Sellusall confronted him, and Harry's finger and thumb were at the duck's tail in an instant. A little in the rear of our trainer stood the "old boy," Spanky, with a subdued expression upon his features, as if the humour for instructing a novice was entirely evaporated.

John Sellusall made no acknowledgment of Harry's respectful salutation, but with his thumbs turned backwards in the arm-holes of his waistcoat, he threw his keen gray eyes from my ears to my heels, and with the angles of his almost lipless mouth drawn back in the form of a parenthesis, remained examining my form in silence. As the hare looks at the pursuing hound, I, too, measured with corresponding minuteness the figure of John Sellusall, not forgetting to sketch his portrait in the portfolio of my memory. He was a slightly-made man, with a florid, hard-looking face, and closely-knit beetling brows. A slight streak of whisker, as if accidentally left, relieved the extreme baldness of the cheek, and I particularly remarked that a mole, about the size of a pea, formed a distinguishing mark upon his chin. His dress appeared a decided cross between a groom's and a quaker's. A low-crowned broad-brimmed hat, inclined to the distinctive character of the latter, and a rather narrow and flimsy white neckcloth presented an additional link of circumstantial evidence in support of this division of his attire. The decided sporting, cut-away style of his dark-green coat, however, tight-fitting light-gray trousers, buttoned closely round the ankles of his boots, with long, narrow straps passing under the soles, and buff waistcoat rounded off at the corners, presented all that unadulterated stable taste, so frequently imitated with great success by professors and masters of higher arts than belong to the horse and his mysteries.

After looking at me for some two or three minutes in unbroken silence, but varying his position as he continued his close and even minute examination, John Sellusall raised my quarter-piece, for which liberty I lifted my near hind leg, and

threw back my ears in a threatening attitude, by way of a hint of my objection to liberties being taken on the part of any stranger. As if something too hot to be agreeable to his fingers, he dropped the corner of the quarter-piece, and coming close to my head looked attentively at my eyes, as if to read therein the qualities of my temper. Whatever his conclusion might have been, it appeared to be of a highly satisfactory nature, for the angles of his mouth were drawn further back, and, I thought, the semblance of a smile flickered over his hard-favoured countenance.

"You have backed this colt, boy?" said our trainer, interrogatively.

"Yessir," sharply responded Harry, with a jerking tug at the duck's tail.

"He goes quietly?"

"Sometimes, sir," rejoined my attendant.

"How does he follow up a gallop?"

"Can't say, sir," returned Harry. "Never rode him, sir. Never saw him rode, sir. Never heard of his being rode, sir."

"But you've galloped him single-handed?"

"A mild canter now and then, sir," added Harry. "Nothing more."

"Top always places his colt well broken in my hands, Spanky," continued our trainer, turning to his head lad. "We'll put this one in the string this morning, and set him going."

Spanky made a signal of acquiescence by touching the peak of his cap; but said nothing.

"The morning's mild," resumed Mr. Sellusall, "and, as he'll take a gentle pipe-opener, let him have the quarter-piece, hood, and breast-cloth on without the rug."

Spanky again signified his entire assent to the proposition, by slightly repeating the telegraphic movement.

I was now left for something short of half an hour, when Harry again made his appearance, and, turning my head round, he adjusted my hood and bridle, drew up the girths, and waited, in accordance with the express orders he had received, for the second appearance of the head lad. Before his patience had

been tried by a long unemployed interval, Spanky again entered the box, and after making an inspection of my appointments, and discovering that the instructions given had been executed with praiseworthy exactness, he gave the brief order to "lead out." I was now taken into the spacious yard adjoining, where several horses, clothed like myself, and the boys up, were being walked about previous to "falling in" to the respective places fixed for them in the string. This order is regulated, generally, by the deference paid to age, and not to merit, either supposed or proved. The "office" being given to Spanky, the flyer, time-keeper, and schoolmaster of the stable, York's Cardinal, headed the line; the others, amounting to twenty-four, taking their assigned situations in rotation, and Spanky, mounted upon a filly, who was to undergo the process of a last sweat previous to being highly tried with the Cardinal, bringing up the rear. Riding a well-bred and handsome gray pony, our trainer accompanied us to the exercise-ground, and, although his proper place was by the side of the front division, he frequently reined in his hack, and waited for my coming up; for I should have stated that my position was last but three. In this order we proceeded to the Heath.

We had not to go far before we were upon the vast expanse of undulated treeless land, with little more bound or mark than the sea itself. The lark rose at our feet as we trod the elastic turf, and high into the clear and cloudless air he soared with quivering pinion, singing joyously in the sunshine, while the dew on the grass glistened like an endless succession of fairy lamps. A light fresh breeze fanned our faces as we began part of our allotted task of walking for a given time; and such were the inspiriting effects of the bright and beautiful morning, together with the excitement of the company I found myself in, that I felt an almost uncontrollable impulse to break away with Harry, and take a spin across the tempting flat which laid before me, in opposition to any check that he might try to put upon the pleasure of doing as I liked with myself.

"Can you hold him?" asked John Sellusall, as I gave Harry quite enough to do to retain his seat in the pigskin.

"Yessir," replied Harry, with well-assumed confidence, but accompanied by a misgiving, of which I was sensible quite as soon as himself.

In my fretful impatience I now bored my head between my knees, and was extremely near dragging my attendant in a humiliating position over my ears.

Our trainer muttered something; the string was stopped, and mounts were exchanged by the head lad and Harry Dale.

There was no mistaking the difference between my riders. Good as Harry's seat unquestionably was, with light hands, quicksilver perception, and dauntless courage, he lacked that great quality which Spanky possessed—experience. The moment he was upon my back I knew that *he* could hold me, and was fully alive to the great improbability of being able to play him either prank or trick with anything like an approach to success.

We were now, I think, on the Cambridge Hill, when the order was given by Mr. Sellusall for York's Cardinal to lead the morning gallop. Away he shot, like a shaft from the thrummed string of a yew-bow; and behind him sprung the lot, one after the other, pulled double as they endeavoured to mend the pace. It now came to my turn. With a bound, which required the whole of Spanky's skill to maintain his equilibrium, I jumped off with the full intention of going to the front; but the steady, determined tug upon my jaws kept me unwillingly in the rear, and I was obliged to keep my place. What new feelings, however, rose within me! How I longed to race with each and all, and outstrip the fleetest! Oh, that I could but have overpowered Spanky! York's Cardinal should have had his work to do to keep the lead in that morning gallop! So I thought in my innocence; such an essay my vaulting ambition would have led me to make.

Discovering, with that intuitive quickness which belongs to us, that I must obey my rider's guidance, I quietly settled into my stride; and after going about half-a-mile, at a moderate pace, was pulled up; but the rest proceeded to complete the allotted portions of the work assigned to them. Although

warm, I was not sufficiently so to require my clothes to be removed for the purpose of being scraped and rubbed; and Spanky, being trustworthy, received instructions to return with me direct to the stable. Soon after my arrival, and just as my hood and bridle had been taken off, the girths slackened, and a game of cat-like diversions commenced with Toby—who, perched on the edge of my crib, welcomed my return with his hoarse me-u-ow, and sundry pats on the nose with the buns of his paws—Harry Dale made his appearance, and I perceived that, in sweating the filly, he had relieved his own system of considerable moisture.

By way of putting into execution his intent of "taking the shine out of their blacking at Newmarket," Harry now threw his jacket aside, and relieving his neck from the cravat, and loosening the braces of his drab knee-breeches, at me he went to work in earnest, beguiling the time of my dressing by first giving me a very small quantity of sweet and fragrant hay. My head, mane, and neck were now lightly brushed, then well wisped, and the finishing touches given by a clean and dry rubber. Harry's attention was now directed to my feet and legs, the former of which he washed with the nicest care, removing the smallest perceptible atom of dirt from the frogs, and seeing that none was left between the shoe and sole of the foot. He then, after rubbing them, bandaged my legs, and gave me some refreshing go-downs of water, for which I thirsted most feverishly. My clothes were afterwards stripped from my back, and with a damp wisp Harry began one of the most vigorous of dressings upon my body, quarters, and thighs, that was ever yet bestowed at the hands of the most exemplary and industrious of stable-boys.

It should be mentioned, however, that John Sellusall stood by as a witness of his efforts, and watched with an expression upon his features which showed the tendency to find fault without the opportunity of exhibiting a more palpable effect.

Harry's last "p-s-h-sh" being brought to an end, fresh clothing was thrown over me, and arranged with scrupulous care so as to be even, and sit in its place. The bandages on

my legs were then removed, and upon his knees Harry dropped to brush and hand-rub until they were dry, bright, and as soft as satin. A feed of corn was thrown into my crib, and my box "set fair." The concluding part of the ceremony was giving me my allowance of good wholesome hay, and I was then shut up for hours, and left to the sole companionship of Toby, and the peaceful invigorating comfort of being undisturbed.

Such were the main incidents of my introduction to a training stable.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FIRST SWEAT.

As my education advanced, my work was gradually increased; and, instead of moderate exercise, in the shape of from one to two hours' walk, and a canter of half a mile or so, every other day, I was set going at half speed, and kept at it both longer and oftener. My first preparation, as it was called, being completed without the aid of physic, I now had a mild dose administered, by way of a preliminary to my second. The effects of this over, I soon commenced doing "good work," and from that entered upon "the strong." My first sweat I remember as well as if it was only yesterday I took it. The allowance of hay had been shortened the night before, and as my neck and shoulders were deemed too heavy, an extra quantity of clothing was placed upon these particular parts of my body, and a light but warm rug thrown across my loins. Harry Dale pitched lightly into the pigskin, rode me, as usual, in the string, and at the end of half-an-hour's walk, the signal was given for York's Cardinal to lead the canter, upon the completion of which we were again stopped.

Six of us now quitted the string, and, led by John Sellusall, mounted on his hack, we went a considerable distance before coming to the nearly level ground selected for my first "spin." Having given some particular instructions to Spanky, who rode the Cardinal, our trainer trotted forward, and, breaking into a hand-gallop, soon became a dwindled dot in the distance.

"Come on!" cried Spanky.

Away, ay, like a fresh-caught bird from hand, went our schoolmaster, with the four others lying close to his heels; but from want of experience, perhaps, on my own part, or that of my rider's, I lost considerable ground at the start, and learned from this early lesson the great value of taking time by the forelock. With an effort, however, I laid myself down in quick, lengthy strides, and, going to work with a hearty will to catch the leading five, soon formed one of the cluster, as we swept along, pulling with might and main. Getting my head to the Cardinal's quarter, I tried to improve my position; but the old horse drew in front, as if to show me that to go before him was not yet within the compass of my power.

Our trainer's hat was now perceived, in the distance, to be held high above his head.

"Old-ard," shouted Spanky, "or I'll be bless'd if we shan't be all among the crockery."

Harry Dale threw the entire weight of his diminutive frame into my jaws, and tugged at them with the whole of his united strength and skill; but my blood felt on fire, and, defying his check, I shot by York's Cardinal, and was not stopped until long past the spot where John Sellusall had stationed himself to witness the termination of the gallop.

"Why didn't you hold him, boy?" said he, with an angry frown, as I was turned and brought back to the place where the rest were pulled up.

"Couldn't, sir," replied Harry, as distinctly as his loss of breath in the three miles' gallop would allow.

Our trainer muttered something between his teeth, which it was quite as well, perhaps, not to understand, and issued a sharp order for Harry to "get off." With distended nostrils and heaving flanks, I was now permitted to stand still for a few minutes, John Sellusall examining my eyes attentively, and making a general inspection of my state and condition after my rattling gallop.

Being conducted, with my companions, to the Rubbing-house, additional clothing was thrown over me to promote per-

spiration, until it ran in streams down my legs, and trickled away in currents from my fetlocks. Water was then given to me from a bottle; my nostrils, lips, and face well sponged, and the clothes thrown forward from my quarters, which were subjected to the ordeal of being well but lightly scraped. The girths of the saddle were then slackened, and my hood taken off. Harry, who held me, began to get my head dry with a rubber, while another assistant commenced scraping my neck on the near-side. That finished, a third lad set-to with a wisp, while the off-side met with its share of the scraper. My mane was now held up and struck over with the same implement, when the three assistants plied their hands and arms vigorously to get my neck, head, and ears dry with as much dispatch as possible. This division of the task accomplished, my mane was brushed smooth, and a fresh dry hood put on. The saddle and clothing were then stripped off, and my body well scraped, wisped, and rubbed until there was not a damp hair upon it. Dry clothing was now put on, my mouth again washed out from the refreshing bottle, and my attendant, in accordance with our trainer's mandate, led me from the Rubbing-house.

After being walked about for some time, Harry Dale was once more "put up," and ordered to give me a steady canter by myself. This done, I was turned towards the stable, and, walking at my ease, I arrived there with the rest of the lot, who had undergone the same fine-drawing process as myself, cool and comfortable, and none the worse for my "spin." In addition to the usual dressing, and ordinary treatment, my legs and feet, on this occasion, were bathed with warm water previous to bandaging them, and instead of water I had a generous allowance of oatmeal gruel to drink, and a bran mash in lieu of corn. A handful of hay thrown into my rack, and I was left to the sole society of Toby for several hours.

I had now undergone my first and second preparation, and, greatly to the delight of John Sellusall, no symptoms of curbs, sore shins, effusions in the legs, heat, or any of the innumerable and unfavourable signs of "going through the sieve" presented themselves. I continued well, sound, and in improving con-

dition. My strong work of three hours every day for exercise and a sweat on every fifth one, took some of the grease out of me, and many a pound of superfluous flesh from my bones; but my strength increased as my muscles became developed, and the heaving of my flanks after "a pipe-opener," was "little by degrees and beautifully less;" my coat, too, shone like satin in the sun, and, as I heard John Sellusall assert with an emphatic adjective, my ribs felt as firm as case-hardened steel, and as clean to the touch as a lady's hand. With an appetite which never left a single oat in the crib, and a spirit to do well all that was required of me, it will readily be believed that I occupied a high position in the esteem of the stable, and, in more ways than the figure on the door of my box literally denoted, was held among the two-year-olds as—No. 1.

As Robert Top observed, at an earlier stage of my history, my first engagement was for the Criterion at Newmarket Houghton Meeting; and as this was fast approaching, and it being determined that I should start for the Stakes, provided my "trial" proved satisfactory, our trainer resolved to bring this important event off without further loss of time.

The meaning of "a trial," in the sense that John Sellusall entertained the term, was the conclusive proof of either the capacity or incapacity of a horse, and not a deceptive supposititious test which leads to the gravest errors and disappointments. With this judicious view, therefore, both I and my trial horse, York's Cardinal, were as carefully prepared in every respect as if we were going to the post for the Derby, and the finishing touches given with equal nicety. In accordance with the usual practice of our trainer, I had my final strong gallop two days before the trial was appointed to come off, and on that previous to running, a considerable reduction in my water and hay took place. In the evening, and just as I had swallowed my limited supply of twenty-four go-downs of water, John Sellusall entered my box, accompanied by Spanky. Few were the words which passed between our trainer and his servant at any time, and upon this occasion not a syllable was exchanged between them. Coming to my head, he looked at my mouth

and eyes, felt my legs and hoofs, and placing a hand upon my heart appeared to count its pulsations. He then stepped on one side, drew back the corners of his mouth, and made a general survey of me from ear to heel.

Having eaten my full allowance of corn, and "short commons" of hay, I bent an inquiring look upon Harry Dale for an additional supply of the latter, when Spanky came forward, much to my chagrin, and adjusted the setting-muzzle. I must confess, however, that had I not been "set" thus early, there would have been a considerable decrease of litter in my box before the village cock had thrown his early challenge upon the breeze; for if not a greedy feeder, I was truly a hearty one.

Once more left to my reflections, I thought much of Robert Top's last words on the morning of my leaving the Stud-farm, and speculated upon the chance of my first attempt for honours being "in" or "out."

At an earlier hour than usual, Harry Dale threw back the door of my box upon its hinges, and began preparing me for the momentous event under the immediate *surveillance* of our head-lad, who gazed between his blinkers in the copied taciturnity of his master. Sufficient water was given me just to wash my mouth out, as an introduction to my common measure of corn; and I was then walked for an hour on the heath, in company with my schoolmaster, the Cardinal. Upon my return, the customary dressing took place; another feed of corn was presented to me, but not even a lock of hay; and after finishing it I was again "set," and left to enjoy that repose so necessary to our excitable temperaments. Some two hours and a half afterwards, I was again visited, the muzzle removed, my head racked up, and a final wisping and rubbing given to my body and limbs.

I was now ready for the saddle.

"You'll think him much improved, Sir Digby," observed John Sellusall, as he crossed the threshold of my box, followed by my owner.

"Egad!" exclaimed Sir Digby, with a crimson flush suddenly spreading over his pale, lined, and handsome countenance.

"Egad!" repeated he, and his eyes rested with the profoundest admiration on my form, as I stood stripped before him; "but he's a fine, strapping colt!"

"And a racing-colt, or I'm much mistaken," replied our trainer, in a decided tone and manner.

"That you never are," rejoined the baronet, languidly, but still keeping his gaze fixed on me.

John Sellusall raised a straightened forefinger towards the brim of his hat in acknowledgment of the compliment; but I remarked, at the time, that he watched Sir Digby narrowly out of the corners of his eyes, to see if it contained more than a single meaning.

"His shape is, certainly, both for speed and stoutness," said the baronet.

"And as fit as a good constitution and *I* can make him," returned our trainer.

Sir Digby drew a long breath, and smiled as he spoke.

"It's our turn, Sellusall, to pull off a few of those good things which began to wear, in my mind, a fabulous existence, and I fervently trust that not only the turn, but the time has arrived."

"Barring accidents," added our trainer, extending a hand towards me, "there stands your chance, Sir Digby, of turning the tables at last. He's better than he looks, and I think will prove too good for the Cardinal."

"At what weights do you try them?" asked the baronet.

John Sellusall drew back the corners of his mouth as he replied, with a cunning leer, "We'll speak of the weights, Sir Digby, an hour or so hence. Lead out, Spanky."

A few seconds more, and I was on the road to "my trial."

CHAPTER VIII.

THE TRIAL AND FIRST APPEARANCE IN PUBLIC.

The ground selected for "my trial" was one of the severest kind that could possibly be chosen for the purpose, being two miles of the Warren Hill; and I suppose, from what I heard pass between Sir Digby and our trainer, that few of my age

were called upon to exhibit such a terrific essay of their powers of speed and stoutness.

"You'll break the colt's heart, Sellusall," observed the baronet, as my hood and clothes were stripped from me.

"It must be something more than he'll get this morning to break his heart, Sir Digby," replied our trainer, adjusting a small saddle upon my back; but, as I subsequently learned, it sunk the scale exactly level with the large, spreading one girthed upon the back of York's Cardinal.

"They've an even eight-stone-seven up, Sir Digby," whispered John Sellusall, screening the movement of his lips with a hand; "but, as the boys weighed without the saddles, we can manage to keep the weights not only from them, but the scouting touts here;" and as he spoke he pointed to several groups of men loitering about in the distance, evidently on the watch for the issue of my trial.

"These fellows are remarkably shrewd," replied the baronet, smiling, as he lifted a race-glass to his eyes, and swept the horizon.

"Yes," rejoined our trainer, "and are up to every move we can make; but I'll set a puzzle for their brains to-day;" and the parenthesis became strongly lined as he added, in the same suppressed tone, "they'll gallop some way beyond where the trial ends, and the winner be pulled for the loser to go in front."

"A wise precaution," remarked Sir Digby, still interested in the view he was taking through his glass; "but the boys must be cognisant of this piece of justifiable deception."

"There are secrets of the stable, Sir Digby," returned our trainer, "which must be intrusted to those belonging to it; but I never permit more to be known than is absolutely impossible to keep to myself."

Spanky was now lifted with a light, graceful movement upon my back, and Harry Dale, with my hood and clothes over his arms, and bottle in hand, stood at my head, with a pink flush mantling in his cheeks, and his hard, bright eyes glistening with excitement.

Although both Sir Digby and John Sellusall had spoken of

our respective riders as "boys," neither of them could be said, strictly speaking, to come under that particular description; for even if Spanky's title to juvenility was not totally without the semblance of support, the number of winters and summers which must have passed over the smooth bald head of the Cardinal's jockey, left his claim without the title of a prop. I can see the small, lean, stunted, lemon-visaged man at this moment, as I then saw him for the first time—ay, and while life remains, his portrait will never become less vivid in my memory. But for him, what might I not have been? The die, however, *he* cast, and here I stand—old, friendless, and forgotten!

"Make good running from the start, Ned," said John Sellusall, "and cut the work out strong as you come to the bend; then improve the pace if the young-un sticks to ye, and shake him off if ye can."

The small, lean, lemon-visaged man sat motionless in the saddle while receiving his orders, and with his restless, suspicious-looking eyes fixed upon the pommel of the saddle, listened attentively to what was said; but uttered not a syllable in reply.

"Lie close all the way," said our trainer to Spanky; "but wait until past the dip. Then take the lead, and keep it to where I stand, but no further."

Spanky raised a finger and touched the peak of the rifle-green cloth cap, as a signal of united acquiescence and comprehension, and in obedience to execution of final orders we now turned to take up our position.

Sir Digby, mounted on John Sellusall's handsome gray cob, cantered towards the spot chosen for the finish, accompanied by our trainer, who rode by his side a raw-boned, goose-rumped, ewe-necked, lop-eared, Roman-nosed pony, which I saw for years afterwards shambling along on many a racecourse with the little shrivelled-up jockey, now sitting with the perfection of ease and grace, York's Cardinal, and who, with the uniform taste of his eccentric class, appeared to have taken some pains in selecting, for his hack, one of the ugliest of its kind.

By instinct I knew what was required of me, and as we

jumped off together I tried to rush before my time-keeper; but with his hands down, and throwing his back almost upon my quarters, Spanky pulled me in the rear, and I settled in my stride in about half a length, and slightly to the off side of York's Cardinal. Away we went, the jockey of riper years looking, from time to time, over his shoulder, and, as he did so, continuing to increase the pace until we were tearing over the ground with the fleetness of the wind. Still, however, I was running well within myself, and gave Spanky quite enough to do to keep me in the assigned position of waiting upon my leader. I was now permitted to creep closer to the front, and as my head lay parallel with the girths of York's Cardinal, his rider both shook and spurred him; but the effort failed to "shake me off." Neck and neck, head and head, we swept up the hill. Oh! that Spanky's steady check were eased but for a single moment! Such was my hot impatient desire as I hung upon his arms, when the slackened rein shot a pleasure through my heart, which we can only feel whose fiery nature it is to love the glorious contention of the race. Forward I drew—ay, a full, clear length, when, as we passed the spot where Sir Digby and John Sellusall had stationed themselves, I was again pulled back, and the "trial" was over. Severe, indeed, had it been, and as Spanky threw himself with the professional turn over my near shoulder on to the ground, my reeking sides, distended nostrils, and quickly-heaving flanks testified that two miles of the Warren Hill, commenced with good running, increased to strong, and finished with all we have in us, are enough to try the stoutest hearts, and best of wind and limb.

The treatment immediately following this unquestionable proof of the quality of the steel within me was precisely that which I received after my first sweat.

If I stood well in the opinion and favour of "our stable" before, I now became its sanguine hope as the anticipated and probable winner of some of those great prizes which the Racing Calendar announced in my list of engagements. Our trainer personally superintended nearly all that was done for me, and seemed jealous of any one being in my box, unless he

was present also. The moment the door was unlocked in the morning, there stood John Sellusall, and his shadow was invariably the last that stole across its threshold as I was left to the repose of "Nature's soft nurse—the honey-heavy dew of sleep."

Day by day passed on, until the eventful one—big with fate—arrived for me to make my first appearance in public. I had taken my last "pipe-opener" two days before, and pulled up, according to Spanky's expressed opinion, "as fresh as paint;" for, except in particular cases, where a horse was constitutionally disposed to accumulate flesh quickly, our trainer strictly avoided "rattling gallops" on the near approach of running, and everything likely to cause staleness. My plates had been put on the previous afternoon, and even the plaiting of my mane was then accomplished, so that I might not be disturbed and fidgetted at a time when tranquillity is of the greatest importance.

It was a bright and bracing day late in October, and within rather more than a couple of hours of my being led out to run for the Criterion, that Robert Top made his welcome appearance in my box. He was dressed, and looked, from head to heel, exactly the same as when I last saw him watching me enter No. 1.

"What, my lad-o'-wax!" cried he, throwing a keen look over me as I stood stripped before him, during the last polishing rub, which Harry Dale was bestowing with the eye of an artist to the finishing touches of the picture upon his easel. "What, my lad-o'-wax!" repeated he in the well-remembered attitude of earlier days, "and is it all agoin' to come to pass just as the jolly old proffit Robert Top said it would, an' no mistake?"

"How do ye think he looks, sir?" inquired Harry, after giving, as he thought, reasonable time for Mr. Top to draw a tolerably comprehensive opinion upon the point.

"How do I think he looks?" returned Robert with a futile effort to get his hands deeper in the pockets of his drab breeches. "Why, to my mind, Harry," continued he, "he looks a real angel of a race-oss."

"Psh-sh, psh-sh," hissed Harry. "No fault to find i' the condition, I think, sir?"

"There's nothin' to be done as far as *I* can see, Harry," rejoined the head of the family of the Tops, in a tone and manner which conveyed the inference that human vision had its limits in the given capacity of the speaker. "There's nothin' to be done as far as *I* can see," repeated he, "and nothin' left undone that ought to be done. He's in the tip-top bloom o' condition!"

"He'll pull it off, sir, won't he?" returned my youthful attendant, with a certain degree of palpable nervousness.

"Is that three-pun-ten on?" inquired Mr. Top.

"To the last bless-ed mag," responded Harry.

"There's nothin' like metal!" exclaimed Robert, with enthusiasm. "You're a spicy little kid, Harry; but don't be afeard, lad. That three-pun-ten 'll roll like a damp snowball, bigger as it goes."

This reply seemed to give infinite assurance to Harry, whose features became lighted up with the united expression of confidence and hope.

The stable clock at length struck the hour preceding that appointed for me to go to the post, when I was led, hooded and clothed, from my box, and walked quietly towards that part of the heath "from the turn of the lands in," where my maiden public appearance was to take place, either for success or defeat.

The company already assembled consisted of a black patch in the distance, so unlike the dense crowds I subsequently witnessed in scenes of a similar kind; and although the number was increasing from various points of the compass, it never reached the usual attendance of a popular race meeting. If, however, the Houghton—that knell of the departing race season—lacked in quantity, the deficiency, perhaps, was made up in the quality of the spectators; for few were present who were not of England's aristocratic lineage and gentle birth.

The signal was now given for saddling, and immediately afterwards the small, lean, lemon-visaged jockey, who had made the running for me in the trial, stood booted, spurred, and capped by my side. Over one arm he held a saddle, which John Sellusall himself placed upon my back, and girthing it

tight, but not inconveniently so, announced that I was ready to receive the further portion of my eight-stone-seven, by briefly remarking that "all was right."

The jaundice-cheeked wearer of the cap and boots threw an over-coat, of pepper and salt hue, from his back, and revealed himself, like a pea from the pod, in the glittering colours of his master, a bright cherry satin jacket with a white hoop. "A leg up,"—and I was mounted.

Sir Digby, with two hectic spots burning fiercely in his generally pallid countenance, walked some distance with me as I was turned to go to the post; and when no one was near, I heard him say, in a subdued tone, to my rider, who stooped from his seat to receive his orders, "Take the lead, and keep it."

CHAPTER IX.

THE CRITERION.

My maiden race! Ay, many a year has fled since I walked with a proud and dainty tread to the post for my "maiden race;" and the pulses of those who knew me well and loved me, beat quickly, I ween, as there I stood, like a bird with outstretched pinions, ready to cope with heart and limb in the closely-approaching struggle. My swollen veins, corded like a thick net upon my skin, my eyes felt ready to start from their sockets, and it was with difficulty that I could restrain myself from making an attempt to break away with my jockey or unseat him in a corresponding method, I suspect, to that adopted by my dam when she could not brook the impatience of delay.

"Go!" The flag dropped, and we were off. As gunpowder flashes to the spark, I answered the first and scarcely perceptible motion of my jockey's hand; and as soon as I could get into my stride—for, although one of the speediest, I was far from being quick in getting to my work—I laid myself down for the foremost place, and wanted no "call" to do my best to occupy it. In the field of seven, which I had to con-

tend with, there were two who jumped off with a lead at an extraordinary pace; and, as the course to be run over was only 5 furlongs, 182 yards, they threatened to cut the rest down before a chance presented itself of getting to their heads. When, however, I became settled in my stride, I felt the exultation of seeing that I was reaching them with ease; and upon placing myself parallel with their heads, I found, notwithstanding the vigorous effort they made to go in front of me, that I could quit them when and how I pleased. Another instant, and I drew myself clear of the cutters-out of the work, and, shaking them off, galloped in, hard held, the easiest winner of the Criterion Stakes on record.

There was no shouting at my victory—no whirling of hats in the air; but, as I was pulled up, Robert Top stood by my side, and the warm glow of pleasure deepening the tinge of health upon his features, evinced the unbounded delight he felt at my triumph, although so silently expressed. As my rider dismounted to return to scale, my head was taken hold of by our trainer, the saddle hastily lifted from my back, and Spanky and Harry Dale, with united cheerfulness and alacrity, commenced the usual practice of scraping, rubbing, and "bottle-holding," which forms the concluding scene in "the national sport of a great and free people."

"I'll back Sheet Anchor for the Derby," cried a voice, which I at once recognised as Sir Digby's.

"I'll lay fifteen to one against him," responded a round better, whose position on the turf may well be reckoned among the proofs of facts being stranger than the wildest fiction.

"To a thousand, then!" rejoined my owner.

The "great bookmaker," with his dark, searching eyes, entered the bet without making an observation, and as he completed the brief but important memorandum that he hazarded fifteen thousand in those few marks, he shouted at the pitch of his stentorian lungs that "he would lay against Sheet Anchor for the Derby."

"I'll do it again!" returned the baronet.

The pencils were once more at work for a few seconds, and

before my clothes were adjusted, preparatory to my return to the stable, thirty thousand pounds was laid against me by one who, a few short years before, would not have been trusted, in his honest calling, for half as many pence.

In direct opposition to the cool and dignified bearing of head lads, and experienced boys when "the stable" pulls an event off in accordance with its anticipation, and united and several interests, Harry Dale was brimful of enthusiasm, and with the eyes of Newmarket upon him, appeared to be either forgetful or indifferent to that Argus-eyed community.

"Stop my windpipe!" exclaimed he, as, accompanied by Spanky, he conducted me across the heath on my return to my quarters. "Stop my windpipe!" repeated Harry, with the self-satisfied air of having mainly contributed to the successful termination of the result, "if I didn't KNOW we should win it."

Spanky, who was looking between his pair of patent blinkers with the professional air of a "head lad" belonging to a "great stable" upon throwing in for a "good stake," considered this voluntary speech, in connection with the manner of delivering it, as a positive breach of etiquette, and one that demanded wholesome correction on the spot.

"Now, I tell ye what it is, my fine feller," said he; "this won't do at any price. It's all very well for a parcel o' sweeps who go to races for a spree, to holla and be full of bounce on their luck; but out-an'-out swells, and all belonging to such a stable as *ourn*, walk on quite the t'other side the street. *We* win like gentlemen, all on the quiet; and when the boot's on the t'other leg or the pot boils over, why, in such case, we pull up our shirt-collars, and shell out the rowdy as if we could afford to spare it, without putting ourselves on short allowance of brandy-and-water and cheroots."

"Hah!" ejaculated Harry, "then none of ye can feel as I do. Bless'd if my in'ards," continued he, giving himself a significant tap about the middle of the miniature copy of Robert Top's white linen jacket, "aint more than *I* can keep on the quiet! Why, my three-pun-ten's become a real dollop o' tin!"

"What did you back him at?" inquired Spanky.

"I got on," replied the elated Harry, "at eight to one, sir."

"Eight-an'-twenty pounds landed, eh?" rejoined the head lad, with undisguised admiration at what he called my attendant's "pluck."

"I went in, ye see, sir," returned Harry, "for a burster. 'A lump or nothin,' said I to myself. Up went the brown. 'Head,' called I, and head it came as certain as if biffins aint baked pippins!"

"An' what are yer going to do with yer winnings?" asked Spanky, who appeared to lose much of the unlimited distance hitherto existing between Harry and himself; and the sudden change, as I then thought, seemed to be the effect of his discovering the great addition to my attendant's pecuniary resources.

"I mean," said Harry, with an important air, which touched slightly upon condescension, "to send a commission to town, and back our crack to a pony for the Derby."

"All the eggs, then," added Spanky, "are not to be put into one basket for the futer, eh, my fine feller?"

"Well, sir!" returned Harry, "if the event didn't come off 'xactly co-rect, one would like to have a feather or two left to fly with."

"That's business, and nothing *but* business!" observed the head lad, with admiration at the policy. "You'll do the trick one o' these days, my fine feller, I know; but remember what I tell yer of the difference between winning like a swell and a sweep; and when the boot's on t'other leg, up with the shirt-collar and give it plenty o' cheek. That's the way to stare yer losses out o' countenance!"

Harry Dale expressed his readiness to profit by Spanky's advice, and as he did so, we came into the yard of our stable. Upon my arrival, I was surrounded by boys of various ages, sizes, and complexions; and each seemed to vie with the rest in lauding me as "the flyer of my year."

"There's not a colt foaled that can beat him," remarked one.

"He'll cut the work out for 'em at Epsom," observed another.

"He's a lustre," cried a third, "and shall carry my aunt's last fiddle-headed tea-spoon!"

Amid these high-sounding praises I entered my box, and Toby commenced a game of patting my nose, as he marched and purred, delighted at my return, on the edge of the crib.

My value had now increased, and additional attention seemed to be bestowed on the comforts provided for my refreshment. I was well and quickly dressed, my legs fomented with hot water, and bandaged with the greatest care; my feet washed, examined, and cleaned from the smallest particle of grit; a draft of smooth, wheaten-flour gruel, of the thickness of cream, given me to suck through my thirsty and feverish lips; a sweet bran-mash, in lieu of corn, thrown into my crib, with a lock of hay shaken in my rack; and the task of those who waited upon me with so much willingness was done.

The door of my box closed, and I and Toby were once more alone.

CHAPTER X.

HOW TO MAKE A BOOK.

In the language of "our stable," I "wintered well;" and, although thrown out of work from the continuance of a long and severe frost, I got rid of the superabundance of flesh, which increased quickly during my respite from strong gallops, when set going again, without the smallest damage to my legs or feet. Upon the first green buds tinging the hawthorn, to apply a metaphor of my trainer, "I was as sound as a roach, and fine as a star, and fit to run for a man's life." From the conversation which occasionally took place in my box, I learned that my first spring engagement was for the Column Stakes at the Newmarket Craven Meeting; but, from some unexplained cause, it was resolved that I should not start for them. My next was for what is now called "the Blue Riband of the Turf"—the Derby. For this, the most important event for which a horse can be entered, I stood first in the betting at an

early part of the year; but after the decision of the Two Thousand, the winner of that stake, Clearwell, became an equally prominent favourite, and, for a time, caused me to occupy second place in the list of prices.

"You're not 'xactly what we've tried to make yer, bo-o-oy," said Harry Dale, giving me a playful smack on my glossy quarter, as he re-adjusted my clothes upon completing "a dressing over," one morning. "You're not 'xactly what we've tried to make yer, my bo-o-oy," repeated he; "but that's our misfortun', and not *your* fault. Yer friends, my lad-o'-wax," continued Harry, "has done their parts to drive yer honoured name, as you'll shove your blessed nose afore long, considerable in advance, with plenty to spare, o' this rank Duffer Clearwell's; but strike-me-a-loser if it's to be done just now! We've put the pot on till it's come to thinkin' what our precious shirt buttons 'll fetch at the 'ammer if"—Harry paused, and his bright red cheeks faded as he almost gasped—"it should boil over. But it won't," added he with a sudden flush bringing back the colour. "I know it won't. Robert Top says it can't, and that's enough for me. He says, barring accidents, and the Darby's over. But"—the scarlet hue again became dull and muddy—"to be sure, accidents *has* to be barred, and a pebble no bigger than a nut might cause one. A cold, a cough, and where would be my"—Harry's eyes became fixed on vacancy, and he combed back the duck's tail with the fingers of a disengaged hand, while he buried the other slowly and thoughtfully in the adjacent pocket of his breeches.

An empty stable-pail stood close by, and, turning it bottom upwards, my attendant dropped himself gradually until he occupied the centre of the seat, with his elbows resting upon his knees, and his chin upon his thumbs.

"It won't do," said he at the termination of an interval which seemed to have been assigned to deep reflection; "it won't do," repeated he, as if waking from a heavy sleep, "to fly one's kite with one string. It mayn't break; but second thoughts tell us that it may. For the public—that jolly cake as bears cuttin' and comin' to again—it's all very well to back a

favourite out-an'-out, and up with their 'ats and *hooray* like what's-o'-clock when it comes off all right; but it won't do for this child, seein' that the boot is particularly often on the t'other leg. *I* must make the business steadier than that, if I'm to take the shine out of their blackin' at Newmarket."

My youthful attendant paused in his soliloquy, and nibbled the nail of a thumb close to the quick.

"There must be no luck in the trade," at length resumed he, with the same thoughtful expression. "Luck may be rosy for a time; but she never lasts that colour long. Now, having settled the point so far that spinnin' a copper, and callin' 'ed, is precious likely to turn up tail, let's see how I can rig the brown so as to have a couple o' 'eds, when I go in for a game o' pitch-an'-toss."

Harry Dale folded his arms across his breast, and, stretching out his legs, stared at the ceiling immediately above his head.

"There can be no certainty," continued he, "of the fastest flyer that ever was dropped bein' landed a winner until his number's up and his jockey's scaled. There you stand," and he pointed to me as he spoke, "a race-oss, and the guv'nor says the colt's not foaled that can beat ye. You carry the stable-money for the Darby, and therefore I needn't say are meant, because 'meant' means the money's on. So far so good. But supposin' a change in the weather brings on a cold; supposin', when you take your next 'pipe-opener,' you pull up as lame as a tree; supposin' you get cast and rick yer back, or a change o' water, just a day or two before you're brought out for that event, gives ye a touch o' the wishywashy willywabbles—where shall we all be then, I should like to be informed?"

Harry brought the palm of a hand upon his forehead with a loud crack as if the thought required counter-irritation.

"Put in the hole, by ——!" added he. "These nateral risks, so to speak," continued Harry, with a shake of the head, "are thick enough, let alone the sops held out for the nobblin' purfession, which is up to every dodge to get at a 'oss; and so we may see, without lookin' through our grandmother's specta-

cles, what a lucky bag is with lots o' blanks and prizes like pearls in 'ailstorms."

My attendant appeared, for some seconds, to have come to the termination of the mood for communicating his inward thoughts to Toby and me; but after a lapse he hit the vein off again, and resumed.

"It came off right once—it may again; but *I* don't try it a third time. No; the pull's against the player, and I must be with the *pull*. Now, although there's neither a trainer—not even John Sellusall himself—nor a jockey in the world, that can score winnin' a certainty, a stable-boy like me may nail losin' as true as a die. Half a pail of water on the mornin' of runnin's done the trick many a time, and then"—Harry smiled—"the public talked of how he lathered like soft soap and 'ot water, and how he ran staggerin' behind from the start to the finish. Well! speakin' o' things in the general line, there can be no better stroke o' business than layin' against a dead 'oss, or what may be accounted as good as dead. *That's* a certainty and no mistake; and as sure as eggs is eggs there's never a large field brought to the post but what many a one's just as safe as if boiled down for catsmeat. The jolly secret is how to get at the dead 'uns; but if the public's on before the stable, it doesn't require the cunningest witch living to find out their pedigrees. With you, my bo-o-oy," said he, damping the end of a finger and thumb, and snapping them together in the direction of where I stood, "the public's all right for the Derby. Our tin was on afore theirs, my bo-o-oy, and between fifteen to one and nine to four's good edgin'. Yes, you'll run on the square this time, whatever they may do with ye the next, and hangin' on to Robert Top's o-pinion, I'll stand as I am, neck or nothin', although"—and Harry's determination seemed to receive a sudden and severe check—"I ought to recollect that a bet's but half made until well 'edged. No matter. I'll try it once more, and then"—he brought his hands together with a crack, which made me spring from the ground as if I'd been shot at—"Softly, lad, softly," added he, as he rose from the pail, and soothed my easily excited fears by

gently rubbing my head and neck. "I was forgettin' where I was, like the sportin' parson when he tipped 'em 'a southerly wind and a cloudy sky' instead of the Old Hundred."

Assured of no real cause for alarm, I soon lost the effects of my attendant's somewhat ill-judged enthusiasm, and he again occupied his position on the bottom of the stable-pail, and resumed the project of "how to make a book."

"Good things, such as dead 'osses," continued Harry, "are not to be picked up every day; but the oracle's to be worked without such certainties as them, I know. Now, supposin' I was to back a likely lot at a long figure—just as the pencils begin to move about 'em, and lay off as they come up, *that* would be one way of making a book, and with those that *did* come up I might stand on velvet. But some would go back, and others clean out o' the bettin' altogether."

Harry's brow became knitted and lined with thought, and he again had recourse to the closely-nibbled thumb-nail.

"They'd be dead lorsses, they would," re-commenced he; "and I couldn't stand against dead lorsses. I want to play just t'other kind o' game."

It was several minutes before Harry Dale spoke again; but during the pause he appeared to be making abstruse calculations through the medium of a few pieces of straw which, in silence, he continued to add and subtract from each other on that small part of the stable-pail free from his immediate personal occupation.

"Humph!" ejaculated he, "that seems to be more like the genuine ticket. It's figgers, after all: nothin' more nor less than figgers; but to make a book with a balance on the right side, a feller must know more about figgers than how much twice two makes. Yes, yes," and Harry Dale showed the most backward tooth both in his upper and under jaws; "that's where it is. It's figgers."

After delivering this introductory part of his discovered scheme, Harry busied himself with the primitive symbols of arithmetical calculation, and seemed to take indescribable interest in practically illustrating his theory.

"To be sure," continued he, "it's clear enough that a feller may bet so as to keep on the right side the road, let 'em drive the coach as they will. Supposin', now, I was to lay the odds of seven to three against this Duffer Clearwell, and book a bet of two 'undred an' twentysevenpunten to ninetysevenpunten against him. And supposin' I was to lay the odds of the day, nine to four, against you, my bo-o-oy, and book a bet of two 'undred-an'-twenty-five-pound to one 'undred pound. Well! having laid against both of yer, I now take it into my 'ed to back both against the field for just one 'undred-an'-seventy-five-pound. Now, if the Duffer Clearwell were to win, I should lose my bet of two 'undred an' twentysevenpunten; but I should win my 'undred pound against you, my bo-o-oy, and my 'undred-an'-seventyfive-pound on my backin' both against the field, and so a balance of just fortysevenpunten would be in my favour. Now, if *you* were to win, my bo-o-oy, I should drop my two 'undred-an'-twenty-five-pound; but I should nibble the ninety-sevenpunten against the Duffer Clearwell, and still one 'undred-an'-seventyfive-pound on backin' o' both ye against the field, so that I should pull off the same balance of fortysevenpunten let which win that might. But supposin' that neither of yer was landed the winner, how should I stand then? Why, I should stand on velvet; because I must win the ninetysevenpunten against Clearwell, and the 'undred pound against you, my bo-o-oy, while I should drop the bet of one 'undred-an'-seventy-five-pound on both of ye against the field, and thus nibble a clear twentytwopunten. *That's* the way to make a book!" cried Harry, jumping from his seat and striding about in a state of almost indescribable excitement. "I thought when I put on my considerin' cap I should do the trick. Make yourself a winner any way. That's yer sor-r-rt!" and dropping on his hands he ran up and down the entire length of my box with his heels kicking wildly in the air, repeating, "Make yourself a winner any way. That's yer sor-r-rt!"

Harry Dale's means have frequently been varied for the end to be attained; but from that moment he never lost sight of the object—to be a winner ANY WAY.

CHAPTER XI.

THE PREPARATION FOR THE DERBY.

The great event—the greatest of my life—approached. As one of the two leading favourites for the Derby, truly may it be said that the observation of the world was upon me. My name was upon thousands, ay, and upon tens of thousands of tongues; and as I rose or fell a point or two in the betting, men's eyes revealed the secrets of their hearts. Backed as I had been by our stable and the public, the interests of the many were concentrated in my anticipated triumph, although numbers still laid heavily against me, and those were not wanting who risked the hazard of the cast between wealth and indigence, gain and beggary. What watchful care was now bestowed both night and day! My box was constantly guarded, so that no one on desperate mischief bent might approach to injure me, and thus render defeat a certainty by some of the means too often exercised with success by those outcasts of society branded with the name of "nobblers"—tools in the hands of creatures as infamous and more crafty than themselves. Even the path in which I walked to the heath was narrowly examined to see if anything, either accidentally or from design, had been placed in it of a nature likely to lame me; and, whether in or out of my stable, I was always under the immediate direction and solicitous charge of our trainer himself. The most insignificant particular was entrusted to no one else. He gave me my corn, picked and winnowed from every particle of chaff and dust; and, as if suspicious of some inimical design, would frequently dip a finger into the water which Harry Dale brought, and, drawing it across his lips, tasted the draught before I was permitted to drink. The first by my side in the morning, and the last to quit it at night, was John Sellusall. Thus day by day crept on until that arrived for my departure from Newmarket for Leatherhead, at which place quarters were taken preparatory

to my being stripped to go to the post for "the Blue Riband of the Turf." With six others, engaged in some of the minor events of the meeting, we started at dawn on a bright May morning, when the sun was just lifting the mist from vale and stream, and gilding the tree-top as it waved in the fresh, flower-scented breath of the early summer's day. Hooded and clothed, and led by Harry Dale, I crossed the threshold of box No. 1; and upon coming into the open yard a sudden impulse caused me to spring perpendicularly on my hind legs, and, careless of maintaining my balance, I staggered, and, pawing the air, ran the imminent danger of reeling almost backwards to the ground. Harry's vigorous and judicious pull at my bridle, however, brought me with safety on my fore feet again. Never shall I forget the commotion which this playful freak of mine occasioned. Our trainer, Spanky, and indeed the whole of the assembled establishment, looked as if they had barely escaped being swallowed up by a yawning earthquake, concerning which not the smallest preliminary notice had been given. White as any spectre, and breathing with a short convulsive effort, John Sellusall took hold of my head, and pointing in silence for Harry Dale to mount his hack, which stood ready saddled with Spanky in attendance, and gasping like a stranded fish between his patent blinkers, he conducted me with his own hands from the stable-yard, and for several miles on the road.

Nothing of moment occurred between Newmarket and Leatherhead. Here and there inquiries were made concerning "who we belonged to;" but one of the fixed unexceptionable rules of our stable being to render no information upon the most trivial subject connected with it, the questioners received only answers from which nothing could be learned. John Sellusall, however, and the horses under his care, were too well watched not to be well known, generally speaking, as we passed along. Frequently, I was pointed out as the "crack," although clothed like the rest, and occupying no conspicuous position apart from my companions. But the report that we were coming had evidently preceded us; for at certain spots there

were more spectators than accident could have brought together. Whether this circumstance tended to increase our trainer's vigilance I cannot say; but his eyes were scarcely ever turned from me.

Such was the anxious desire that the change of quarters should not render me the least irritable or "off my feed," that as soon as I entered the box prepared for my reception at Leatherhead, Harry Dale opened a basket, which he had carried with some care and much personal inconvenience, and out leaped my stable companion and playmate, Toby.

"There, my bo-o-oy," said he, "we'll make everything look as much like home as pausible, so as the hackles o' your temper mayn't get ruffled."

Wearied with the monotony of the long walk, easy as the stages had been rendered, I felt much relief at finding myself again in Toby's beguiling society; and his hoarse, familiar me-u-ow, as he sprang upon the edge of the crib to stretch his limbs after a prolonged confinement, produced the desired effect of soothing that irritation which, more or less, invariably attends a change of stabling. Indeed, if I may judge from my own feelings, the alterations for the worse in condition on the eve of a race, so frequently assigned to a change of water, might often, with greater reason, be traced to the fretfulness which accompanies our leaving home.

We arrived at Leatherhead on a Friday about noon, and in accordance with our trainer's usual system, to which, however, there were a few exceptions when horses were constitutionally gross, I was to have my last sweat the following morning, consistently observing in my presence to his employer upon one occasion—"If we leave nothing *in* a horse, Sir Digby, how can we expect to get anything *out* of him?"

It is almost needless to add that as soon as I made my appearance on the Downs I became "the observed of all observers." Numbers hastened from all points of the compass, early as was the hour, to see one upon whose powers so much depended; and as I walked past several groups, varied were the opinions, hopes, and fears concerning the result of the

coming struggle. After a gentle canter, by way of "clearing the pipes," the signal was given, and off I jumped, led by York's Cardinal as usual, for a spin of four miles. Lightly but warmly clothed, and ridden by Spanky, I swept along in the wake of my leader at a strong pace, pulling with might and main to mend it; but our respective riders knew the necessity of strictly obeying John Sellusall's orders, and they were—"not to rattle us along." Upon the completion of the allotted task, which I accomplished with the greatest satisfaction to my owner and friends assembled, I was stopped, stripped, scraped, and rubbed; and so terminated my last sweat before going to the post for the great event. The following day I did nothing but walking exercise, but the next our head lad was put up, and again I was set going, my gallop coming under the definition of "good and steady." The day prior to the great race I took a gentle canter after a walk of some duration, and upon returning to my stable was made sensible of the finishing touches of the final preparation. A reduction of hay and water took place, the go-downs of the latter being counted to an even three dozen by John Sellusall himself. The usual measure of corn, however, was not lessened; but the quantity of hay was confined to little more than a double handful. At night, the water was still further reduced to twenty-four go-downs, and upon eating my full feed of corn a mere lock of the sweetest hay was offered to me. Our trainer, with Spanky standing a little in the rear with the setting-muzzle ready in hand, then commenced a minute examination of my state and condition. He first looked at my eyes and mouth, then numbered the pulsations of my heart, watched the calm—as I knew—working of my flank, and felt my legs and feet with the nicest care. Spanky and Harry Dale continued watching him with the fixed attitude of a couple of statues; but the interest entertained by them in the proceeding might be learned from the eagerness of their riveted looks.

John Sellusall said not a word, but drawing back the angles of his mouth, there was the parenthesis, strongly marked as of old. With a pointed finger he telegraphed for Spanky to adjust

the setting-muzzle. That done, the door of my box creaked-to upon its hinges; the key grated harshly in the lock; and I, the fragile web of many a man's fate—the pampered favourite for the hour—dropped gently upon my bed; and so the preliminary scene was closed.

The morning, dusky and gray, had scarcely broken, when John Sellusall, Spanky, and Harry Dale again made their appearance. Our trainer at once came to my head, and again looked closely at my eyes, and pressed a hand upon my heart. Not a syllable escaped his lips, but the expression of his features conveyed the utmost satisfaction at the state in which he found me. I had now just enough water to wash my mouth out before receiving my full feed of corn, which I ate with an unusual appetite, from the curtailment of my allowance of hay the night before. Harry Dale was then ordered to put on my hood and bridle, and, in company with the rest, I was led for an hour's walk. Upon my return, I was permitted to drink exactly six go-downs of water, and then a quick but perfect dressing took place through the combined exertions of Harry Dale and two assistants. The plaiting of my mane engaged Spanky's artistic talent, and my plates, adjusted by a trustworthy disciple of Vulcan, almost completed the preparation for the post. Another liberal feed of corn was now thrown into my crib, which I disposed of with a hearty zest; the setting-muzzle was again buckled on, and all left me, that I might enjoy a few more quiet hours undisturbed.

Some three hours before the time appointed for the race, our trainer, accompanied by Sir Digby, Robert Top, and Harry Dale, visited me. The face of the head of the family of the Tops was a picture to behold, as he strode to my side, and, caressing me fondly, whispered—"I said how it would be, yer know. Robert Top's a jolly old proffit, an' no mistake. He can see a thing or two, *he* can, afore it makes his eyes smart. Some don't possess the bless-ed gift; but"—and he tapped below the gold horse-shoe as in other days—"here's a chicken of another hatch."

"Rack up," briefly ordered our trainer.

With his wonted quickness Harry Dale "racked" my head up, and, stripping me, immediately set to work with the last "wisp over." John Sellusall presented me with a double-handful of corn, and, turning to my owner, remarked, with, I think, the first smile I ever saw upon his countenance, "There, Sir Digby! I have done my duty!"

"He is all that you could make him, Sellusall, let the result be what it may," replied the baronet, in a dry, husky voice.

"I've no fear of it," rejoined Robert, separating his legs, and sounding the depths of his breeches pockets.

Sir Digby drew a long breath, and sighed almost inaudibly, "*I* have."

CHAPTER XII.

THE BLUE RIBAND OF THE TURF.

Sir Digby had two engaged in the race; but my companion was merely to make the running for me, and cut out the work at the severest pace he could accomplish it in as long as his steel lasted. In company with my pioneer, who was led in advance, I entered a place called "the Warren," in which the horses intended for the post were then taking a preliminary walk. With head erect, and a proud, disdainful bearing, I glanced around at my competitors, and boastfully felt I could pull over them with ease—ay, from the start to the finish. A crowd began to gather about me from the moment I quitted the stable; but no sooner was I in the Warren than a dense throng pushed, squeezed, and elbowed each other with little ceremony in their anxiety to get a glimpse at "the crack." I can see them now rudely thrusting each other aside, with staring, blood-shot eyes, and their haggard faces cramped and lined with intense excitement. Upon my effort, perhaps, depended their very lives, or something more dear to many than even life itself.

"What do you think of him, my lord?" inquired a little,

THE FAVOURITE.

dark man, with a hooked nose; and possessing the strongly-marked attributes of one belonging to the house of Israel.

"Too good for your book," responded a tall, aristocratic-looking bystander, who, in a subsequent Derby, now long since run for, but rendered memorable from the attempted fraud attending the result, cleared the turf of the most ignoble set of blacklegs that ever ventured within the precincts of the ring.

"Vill he vin?" rejoined the Jew with his restless, suspicious eyes glancing from the handsome features of the Napoleon of the turf to me.

"I think so," was the answer, in a cool, decided manner, conveying anything but an apparently gratifying impression upon the mind of the questioner.

"S' help me,—if he does," returned he, "I don't know vhere's all the monish to come from! Vhy, the Bank of England couldn't pay it!"

The bell now rang for saddling, and, as if desirous of showing as soon as possible the perfection of condition into which he had brought the flower of his stable, John Sellusall relieved Spanky from his position at my head, and he and Harry Dale proceeded at once to strip me. Robert, however, appeared determined to have, as he expressed it, "a finger in the pie," for he busied himself as much as either of the others, and seemed, in the agility of the helper, to temporarily forget the dignity pertaining both to his high office and position in the social scale as head of the family of the Tops. Removing his hat, he extracted from its interior a silk handkerchief of motley colours, and, shaking it out, applied it vigorously to my neck, shoulders, body, and loins; and following in the wake of Spanky's coarser rubber, I have no doubt that he was then carrying out a long-contemplated intention of giving me the last polishing touch for the Derby.

With regard to my symmetry, condition, and pretensions for the prize, many and diversified were the opinions expressed; but in most such cases conflicting interests usually regulate them. Men rarely speak of us as we are, their judgments being

generally warped by hopes and fears. Some thought me "a Derby horse all over;" others, that "I was not drawn fine enough." One considered me "not half prepared;" another, "fit as a fiddle." A few criticised my shoulders, and asserted "they were not sufficiently thrown into my back." Then there were those who considered my quarters "not well let down." One declared that "he'd eat me, shoes and all, if I stayed a yard beyond a mile with such a loin as *that*." Another held, "I was a picture of a racehorse." To be just, however, my admirers far out-numbered the opponents to my claim to beauty, speed, and strength; and as Ned, the old lemon-visaged jockey, had a leg up, and the remainder of the 8st. 7lb., gaily decked in Sir Digby's colours, dropped like a bird upon my back, I both saw and heard the sanguine hopes which my appearance raised.

Lashing my flanks with my bang tail, as square at the end as a die, I proudly walked in the rear of my stable companion along that distant part of the course from the chair appointed for our parade and canter. Every eye was upon me. I saw them measure me from ear to heel as I passed the distended line of spectators, and my eager spirit for the contest grew momentarily stronger. My jockey's hand and seat, however, acted as a powerful check to certain impulses of a restive tendency, inherited, perhaps, from her I remember first to have seen under the wide-spreading chestnut-tree in the centre of the paddock at the Stud-farm, and the knowledge that he was my master prevented my trying to prove that *I* was his. Led by my pioneer, I took a gentle canter, and then was turned to prepare for the start.

I am speaking of other days, when false starts were made and permitted, for the express purpose of taking the steel out of irritable horses, to the unquestionable advantage to others of a directly opposite temperament. My hot, impatient ardour was too well known not to be subjected to this unfair ordeal; and time after time, as the signal was given for us to "go," one or more refused to stir, and I was pulled and turned so frequently that I began to feel goaded to madness with the fret-

fulness it engendered. At length the flag dropped and we were off.

What a roar of human voices was now borne upon the breeze! "They're off!" pealed from thousands and from tens of thousands of tongues. Flights of horses at reckless speed thundered over the green sward towards certain points of the course commanding a view of the race, and each and all witnessing the contest seemed for the moment to be frenzied with excitement.

As soon as I could get into my stride, I rushed for the distinction of place by going to the front; but Ned's steady pull brought me about the middle of the ruck as we swept in a close compact body up the ascent, which forms the commencement of the Derby course. My stable companion, in accordance with orders, made the running, Clearwell lying second, and, as was afterwards asserted, getting some of his lasting powers spent too soon in consequence of the severity of the pace. As we came to the brow of the hill, several fell back, not being able to live another yard in the front division; but there was still a formidable cluster tearing before, behind, and beside me, with the speed of fleet-pinioned birds. Ned still held me hard as we made the first turn, but in doing so he slightly slackened the pull upon my jaws, and permitted me to occupy a more forward position. At Tattenham-corner, my stable companion's bolt was shot, and, giving way, Clearwell took the lead with two candidates for the ambitious prize lying between him and me. It was now that I improved the pace. Like an arrow I shot past both of them, and then, being pulled as we crossed the road, I hung, running well within myself, upon the quarters of my antagonist, Clearwell.

"Clearwell wins!" now rent the very air; but as I laid my head parallel with his girths, they were answered by equally vociferous ones, "Sheet Anchor—Sheet Anchor wins!"

When just within the distance, my rival drew slightly in advance; but a single shake of my jockey's hand brought us neck and neck, nose and nose. The set-to—the final struggle—now commenced. Ned called upon me to do my best, and, for the first time in my life, I felt the sharp rowels of his spurs in my

sides. Again and again he drove them in, while the straight-cutting whip cracked round Clearwell's body with the sound of exploding percussion-caps. Three strides more, and we should be upon the post. My heart was in the effort, and success was mine!

The cheers which greeted my victory—the almost adulation I received—are never to be forgotten. Men, with faces beaming with enthusiastic joy, thronged about me as I was pulled up, and seemed ready to kneel down and worship the winner of such a contested race; for the award of the judge was—"won by a neck."

Such was the meridian of my fate.

CHAPTER XIII.

FATE'S TABLE IS TURNED.

We were alone—I and my owner were alone, saving that Toby's curled-up form, as he dozed with heavy, blinking eyelids on the edge of my crib, strictly speaking, presents a confessed denial of the fact. There was not, however, any one near to note the details of this between Sir Digby and myself, and they are now revealed as the first and last of its kind that we ever had together. With a hand resting upon my neck, he thus addressed me:—

"In our utmost need of friendship, how rare it is to find a friend. We drown, while those we saved, perhaps, look on regardless of our struggles. Who would have done for me that which you have done? Little else was left that the world values besides a name that my greatest enemy never possessed the opportunity to sully. Nearly all was lost. Led on from step to step, retreat at length became impossible. To pursue the course—to still trust the hazard of the die, might be ruin; but to stop, or even pause, inevitable destruction. The last—the one last chance depended upon your effort. That was the feather in the balance which saved your master!"

He fondly patted my sleek and arched neck as he spoke, and then continued.

"Once more, and but once more, will I play with Fortune. The game looks mine, although but partly won; for the losses retrieved amount not to that which philosophers tell us are seldom found in our possession—enough. In the present case, however, the universal acquisitiveness of our nature can scarcely be said to influence my resolve. I seek to gain, through the means which appear in my power, freedom, complete and perfect, from the chains of slavery my own folly forged. Once broken, and they never shall encompass me again."

His deep-toned, manly voice quivered with emotion, and some seconds elapsed before he resumed his discourse.

"That which I have suffered few know, and but one cares —young, loving, and beloved. That calmer, happier days might be in store for her I have often prayed, and now they break tipped with colours which the hopeful dream of, but, upon their waking, generally see dissolve and vanish. Through you, my noble, gallant horse, a heart and home again will be what they were before I madly staked their happiness for the merest shadow for which a fool ever dropped his substance in exchange. 'Tis too late, however, to speak of that. The past is a cloud that's down upon the wind: I will think of the sunshine for the future. Once more, and but once more, will I play with Fortune!"

The conclusion of the sentence Sir Digby repeated several times before leaving my box, and, as if reluctant to quit it, often returned, after reaching the door, to caress and fondle one whose simple story perchance may tell how slender is the web upon which we hang or fall.

Having particularised, link by link, the chain of my eventful history hitherto, I shall mention that, although my two engagements following the Derby were for the Drawing Room Stakes at Goodwood, and the Ebor St. Leger at York, yet, from the absence of Clearwell from these events, they were regarded as absolute certainties for me, and consequently the fieldmen shook their heads and closed their books when even the tempting odds of ten to one were offered by my supporters that I netted both. Notwithstanding, however, the impossi-

bility of our stable getting their money on, it was determined that I should start for the stakes, John Sellusall remarking in my presence, that "little fish were sweet enough when larger couldn't be caught." It is needless to say more concerning these races than that I met but very small fields, in which there was nothing to compete with but what I could run away from at any point, and win, as was wished, from end to end. For the Ebor St. Leger I cantered in so easily, that something short of two lengths after passing the post I was turned for my rider to go to scale amid the exulting hurrahs of those who seemed to consider this victory the shadow of the still greater one to be contended for in the Doncaster St. Leger, and that, too, within a very brief period.

The week prior to that appointed for the decision of this most important event, I learned through Harry Dale's frequent communings with himself, as he sat on the bottom of the stable-pail, making abstruse calculations upon the safe method to be adopted for the increase of his winnings, that the betting was five to four on me, and three to two against Clearwell. Nothing else, however, was thought to possess a chance in the race; the popular opinion being, that it was reduced to a match between us. One morning, just before my intended departure for Doncaster, after I was dressed and left to Toby's blandishments or my own reflections, I felt some surprise at hearing the key turn, as I thought, stealthily in the lock of the door of my box, and soon afterwards in seeing John Sellusall enter, accompanied by Ned, the old lemon-visaged jockey. I cannot account for the cause, but, the moment my eyes fell upon them, an instinctive feeling of dread and presentiment of evil took possession of me.

"We shall be quiet here," observed my trainer, gently closing the door.

Ned stifled a short, dry cough, and, striding forwards, took up a position with his light, reduced, bony frame resting against a corner of my crib.

John Sellusall, with the acute angles of his mouth drawn back, threw a cold, negligent glance over me, and, slowly fold-

ing his arms across his breast, turned an ear in the direction of where my jaundice-cheeked rider stood, like Toby sometimes did when he heard a mouse in the wall.

"It's touch and go, eh?" said he. "Nothing in which the pull can be said to be in our favour."

"I think the distance may suit him better," replied Ned; "but that depends how the running's made for us."

"Made or unmade," rejoined our trainer, irritably, "slow or fast, we can't book winning a certainty, or anything like it."

Ned shook his head, and began to suck the silver-mounted end of a straight cutting whip which he held in both hands.

"But the opportunity's great of making money," continued John Sellusall, with the parenthesis strongly marked. "We have never had such a chance before, and may never have again."

Ned again shook his head, and sighed despondingly.

"I have done my best," resumed our trainer, "to make Sir Digby understand the immense advantage to which he may turn the cards he holds in his hand; but he either won't or can't understand me. His honour, I suppose, stands in the way of his interests, mine don't."

A faint smile flickered across the features of the lemon-visaged jockey; but he said nothing.

"I told him as plainly as I dare," re-commenced John Sellusall, "that a hundred thousand might now be won by laying against our horse by commission—gently and tenderly managed—and backing Clearwell at the present odds. He, however, stands to win all he wants on the double event; I am not so fortunate."

Ned remained sucking the end of his whip, with his eyes steadfastly bent upon the straw at his feet.

"Sir Digby's determination is, as it ever has been," continued our trainer, "to run to win. There's no cause to quarrel with such a decision on the part of any gentleman; but it doesn't always suit our books, Ned. The boot sometimes fits better on the other leg. Now, *do* we understand one another?"

"We may by-and-by," responded the jockey, leering out of the corners of his eyes.

"A little, very little, will do the trick," returned John Sellusall. "I'll lay you two thousand five hundred to nothing that our horse is landed the winner!"

"Make it an even three thousand," returned Ned, in a discontented tone, as if the amount fell considerably short of his expectations.

"Well, book it so," added our trainer, "and then you'll——"

The lemon-visaged jockey drew the butt end of his whip slowly from his mouth, and, winking his left eye, bent slightly forward, and whispered, "Rope him."

CHAPTER XIV.

THE ROPING FOR THE ST. LEGER.

How I never knew, but Harry Dale's suspicions became roused, that, to use his own expression, some screw was loose with regard to the intention of permitting me to run on my merits for the St. Leger, and acting in accordance with the instructions he had received before entering upon his duties in the training stable, he determined to communicate his mistrust to the head of the family of the Tops without loss of time. Kneeling before an inverted pail one morning, with a small phial of ink suspended by a piece of whipcord to a button-hole of his jacket, and a broad sheet of paper spread and smoothed with some care upon the temporary desk, Harry dipped the point of a gray goose-quill into the bottle, combed back the duck's tail with a disengaged hand, and, glancing at the ceiling just above his head, knitted a brow and thus began:—"Dear Guv'nor. Something's up, but what that something is I don't know. I'm almost certain, though, they don't mean it this time. It's no use asking me why I think so, 'cause I could'nt tell if you was to; but mind what I say, get off all the rowdy down to the last bless-ed mag. It isn't on the square, but quite t'other, and some of 'em will be put in the hole, and so no more at present from your 'umble servant."

"There," said Harry, after perusing the epistle twice over

with pourtrayed satisfaction, "that's what *I* call a letter, that is. In them few words a feller may learn more than some chaps could write in a whole book. Ah!" and Harry Dale drew a long breath as he folded the document in the form in which it was to be dispatched, "it takes *me* to do the trick upon partic'lar occasions!"

The task completed, my egotistical attendant approached my head, and stood gazing at me with his hands buried in the depths of his breeches pockets and his legs stretched apart. So like Robert Top! oh, so like Robert Top!

"I can see it in John Sellusall's ways," said he, "in those eyes of his which look sharp enough to gimlet themselves through stout oak boards. They won't win the Leger with ye, my bo-o-oy. No, the boot's on the other leg; but it shall be the right one with me, ay, as right as the sun."

'Tis a long time ago; but I remember, as he quitted my box, that a deep sombre shade stole over the walls, and I felt the darkness creep, as it were, into my heart, which, from that moment, it never left.

Notwithstanding the design, however, of purposely losing the race, the same care and attention were bestowed upon me for the great event, as if a directly opposite result was most ingenuously desired. I was sweated, watched, guarded, and treated precisely in the same manner as our trainer observed, with so much minuteness, in the preparation for the Derby. I learned also, that acting in concert with others, he openly backed, or, more properly speaking, seemed to be supporting me for a large amount at the short odds then quoted as the current price, when at the same moment he was laying as heavily as he could against me by commission. Not a guinea of good money was allowed to slip. The moment an offer was made to back Sheet Anchor, it met with a ready, but wary acceptor, to whom the secret had been confided. Thus thousands upon thousands were laid, the public entertaining the greatest confidence in the integrity of my owner; and the "stable money" still being "got on," to all outward appearances, confirmed the general belief that, at least, I should run to win. Nothing, of necessity, could

be more deadly certain in adding to the gains, disgraceful as unquestionably were the means of John Sellusall, and the select few concerned in carrying out the plot. Our trainer had settled with my jockey that I should be "roped," or in other words "pulled," and consequently the event was no longer a matter of uncertainty to them. They had resolved upon turning my predetermined loss to their own profit, or insuring an advantage devoid of the smallest possible risk; and with such opportunities and with such men, the surprise need not be great that the race, indeed, is not always to the swift.

The important event of the North was now close at hand. On the day previous to my leaving Newmarket, Sir Digby, accompanied by John Sellusall, entered my box, and, to an order given by the latter, my clothes were stripped off by Harry Dale, and I stood before my owner in all the pride of beauty, health, and strength; but the darkness of my life was gathering around —it had stolen into my heart, and it was sad.

"Why, he's half a stone better than when I last saw him, John," observed Sir Digby with a bright smile, like a ray of sunshine, spreading over his handsome features from lip to brow.

"Do you think so, Sir Digby?" responded our trainer, and the parenthesis became strongly lined as he drew back the corners of his mouth, and peered sideways at his master with feelings, I suspect, of no enviable nature. "Do you think so, Sir Digby?" repeated he.

"Indeed I do," emphatically rejoined the baronet. "The horse appears to be in a much improved form. I like his barrel better, as, without being too fleshy, it gives me the impression of increase of strength."

"I am glad, Sir Digby, that his condition meets with your approval," returned our trainer.

"It is all we could desire, all that your skill, John, could make him," added Sir Digby, with increased pleasure and confidence, as he stood with his arms folded across his breast, like an enthusiastic painter gazing at some exquisite production of his art.

"But we should recollect, sir," remarked John Sellusall, as perhaps his conscience pricked him for his treachery, "that the

running for the Derby leaves the Leger much in doubt. We can't book it a certainty, or anything like one."

"So you have said before," replied my owner, and I thought there was a slight peevishness both in the tone and manner. "So you have said before," and he drew a hand across his brow, as if a sudden pain had shot across it.

"If our horse be improved," resumed John Sellusall, "as I don't for a moment deny, Sir Digby, and to an extent which I was not prepared to see in so short a time, still we cannot depend upon his pulling through. Clearwell's form I know also to be much better than it was in the spring, and although, barring accidents, he is the only horse who is likely to run us close, yet it's my duty to tell you, Sir Digby, that I think he *will* do so. The distance—let them make the running as they like, with the course as it's almost sure to be in this weather—must suit our horse in every respect. He has the strength to stay with the speed and heart to race; but precisely the same qualities have to be contended with in Clearwell. We possess no advantage in these respects, that I can see."

My owner drew a long breath, and again his hand was drawn across his forehead.

"I--I--I perceive the meaning of your argument," stammered Sir Digby, and his cheeks became almost livid as he spoke. "You would not have me depend upon his winning the double event?"

John Sellusall said nothing in reply, but kicked and shuffled the straw at his feet.

Sir Digby observed the movement—so trifling in itself and yet so significant—with a close and anxious look, and large beads of perspiration broke out and stood glittering upon his upper lip as he uttered, almost inaudibly, "Too late, too late! *I* must risk the hazard of the throw."

Whispered as were the words, John Sellusall heard them. The parenthesis became deeply lined upon their delivery, and, if my quick powers of hearing practised no deception, a finger and thumb were snapped together in a subdued manner, and I thought there was more, much more, in the sound, than any language of his could have conveyed.

Winged moments are ever on their flight. There is no let, check, or stop for time.

The day—with me it seems but yesterday—at last came when I took a preliminary walk, hooded and clothed, on the soft, spongy fallow field, in the rear of the stables, erected in the immediate vicinity of the stand, on the Doncaster Common. A clustering crowd gathered about and around me, and, as usual, scarcely two opinions were expressed alike concerning the anticipated result. One thought "I could not scramble through the dirt;" another, that "hard ground was known not to suit me." Some believed "I should run in front to the Red House, where I must shut up;" others, "that I could stay to the distance, but not a yard further." A few entertained the lively faith, that "to cut out the work from the beginning to the finish, and win from end to end as I liked, would only be a gentle pipe-opener for me." I saw, however, more than one sneer at either this expression of sanguine trust in my capacities, or the vivid colour of the anticipated result; there might have been a third and more certain cause.

A bell rang, and, as it did so, a buzz of human voices hummed upon the wind. Stripped, rubbed over, and saddled once more, eight stone seven fell like a bird upon my back, and Ned, the old lemon-visaged jockey, again settled himself in his seat, to ride me to the post. Not the most trivial attention had been omitted, and, as I walked and cantered before the assembled thousands, loud and general were the praises which my appearance produced.

The field I had to meet was composed of eight, each and all of whom I had beaten in my preceding engagements but one, and that one an outsider, whose hopeless chance of success revealed itself the moment he stood denuded of his clothes. It will readily be believed, therefore, how high I stood in the betting, and, had it not been for the stable commission, still covertly at work, the odds, at starting, instead of being six to four against me, would probably have been five to four on me.

As we were marshalled in order by the starters, and stood

at the post ready for the signal to commence the work, I resolved to win though pulled double.

The red flag fluttered a few seconds in the breeze and dropped. We were off. With an effort which proved far beyond Ned's control, I jumped to the front, and, getting into my stride with a rush, took the lead at a pace which bore the appearance, I expect, of being too good to last; for many a jockey can affirm, to lose a race cleverly is frequently more difficult than to win one. Ned slipped his hands forward, and getting a short hold of his reins, threw his body back almost upon my quarter. The entire weight of his body, diminutive as it was, being thus thrown into my jaws, mastered me, and I was compelled to slacken my speed. With my head still first, on we swept to the cover, belting the distant part of the course, where my old antagonist Clearwell, lying in the ruck, crept forward, and again we were side by side. This position we maintained to the Red House, where I again shot to the front, and came with the lead of a clear length round the bend. Again, however, Ned's weight was in my jaws, and the succeeding moment Clearwell's head laid within a few inches of my girths. I threw desperation in the effort; but my powers were becoming spent. The distance was now gained. Head and head we once more swept along, amidst the shouts of thousands. On the post, ay, on the post itself, at the moment I wanted but a slackened rein, the heartless devil on my back pulled me from my stride, and the race was—lost!

CHAPTER XV.

THE SALE AT TATTERSALL'S.

Within a little more than a week of my defeat for the St. Leger, the following announcement appeared in the form of a public advertisement:—"To be sold at Tattersall's, on Monday next, without reserve, the entire stud, brood mares, and blood stock, the property of a gentleman retiring from the turf." To have conveyed the whole truth, it should have added:—"With a broken fortune and a broken heart." Poor Sir Digby! I saw him

but once after the great, the ruinous loss which he sustained through the vile machinations of his servants, and that was immediately after the race, as I stood for a few seconds opposite the weighing-house. I have not forgotten, and can never forget, the expression of care upon my master's features; and yet as he came close to my head, and pressed a hand upon my neck, a smile of gentleness flickered upon his lip—a smile which told far more eloquently of deep-seated misery than any tears could have expressed. He turned to leave the spot with slow measured step—still with a smile upon his lip—and we never met again.

As the newspaper report announced:—"There was an immense attendance of the sporting world to witness the disposal of Sir Digby's well-known and valuable stud; the respective lots fetched unusually large prices." It seems almost unnecessary to say that I was one of "the lots," and as it came to my turn to be led from the box, which announced the position I occupied in the catalogue, the interest of the sale reached its culminating point.

The familiar word at Tattersall's—"sold"—fell upon my ear as a stable companion changed ownership, when I was conducted into the yard to meet with, as the newspaper report informed its readers, "that smart competition which, notwithstanding the recent disappointment the public had received, my well-earned laurels were sure to bring."

"Number fefty-four," cried a voice as I walked towards a corner of the yard in which was placed a kind of rostrum occupied by one whose looks proclaimed him healthy and happy, and well to do. "Number fefty-four," repeated the temporary tenant of the rostrum with increased force, as I arrived immediately under his elevated post—"Sheet Anchor, by Make Safe, out of Dangerous, by Fleece'em, dam Treachery, by Nobbler, winner of the Criterion at Newmarket Houghton Meeting, the Derby, Drawing Room Stakes at Goodwood, Ebor St. Leger, and ran a good second for the St. Leger at Doncaster. What will any gentleman please to give for Sheet Anchor?"

There was a pause, and men looked at each other as if trying to learn what words as yet had not disclosed.

"May he be run down?" asked a sallow-cheeked, youthful

THE SALE BY AUCTION.

spectator, with a brimless hat and long straight hair hanging over the collar of a capacious drab-coat, on which there were great white buttons as big as full-grown native oysters.

"He may be walked down to please you, sir," replied the auctioneer, politely; "but we don't run horses like Sheet Anchor in a stable-yard."

"Ho!" exclaimed the proprietor of the white buttons as big as oysters; and feeling, perhaps, the keen edge of the satire more than he could bear with resignation, he backed from his prominent position in the throng, and took a hurried departure.

The crowd now pressed so closely around me, that I began to exhibit signs of impatience at the liberty.

"Take care, there, take care of his heels," hallooed the possessor of the rostrum as I lashed out a leg by way of a warning.

"Ha, the old blood!" ejaculated a well-remembered voice, and upon looking at the quarter from whence it came, there stood Robert Top, with Toby securely but comfortably held under an arm. The earliest friend of my colthood gave me a slight nod as our eyes met; but I thought, at the moment, that the gold horse-shoe, pinned with the accustomed neatness in the snowy cravat, moved as if a deeply-drawn sigh issued from its vicinity.

"What will any gentleman please to give for Sheet Anchor, to be sold with his engagements?" said the auctioneer, making a bird's-eye sweep of the many and characteristic faces now turned towards me. "Say something," continued he, "for remember, he is to be sold."

"I'll give a thousand guineas for him," was the first offer; but I did not see the person by whom the bid was made.

"Twelve hundred," cried a second.

"Twelve hundred guineas," repeated the auctioneer, surveying, with a professional snatch of view, the whole of the assembly; "and fefty," continued he, being telegraphed by the slight and almost imperceptible wink of the little Jew I had first seen in the Warren on Epsom Downs, and whose opinion then was, that the Bank of England could not pay the money lost, provided I won the Derby. "Thirteen hundred," resumed the auctioneer, "and fefty; fourteen hundred and ——"

"Eighteen hundred," loudly broke in the Israelite, jerking his hat on one side, and looking rather flushed and defiant.

The auctioneer began to smile.

"Eighteen hundred guineas are bid for Sheet Anchor with his engagements, and he's to be sold."

"Two thousand."

The auctioneer bowed slightly towards a tall, gentleman-like person, although dressed most strangely, in a pink and white broad-striped shirt, in the front of which were two immense gold and enamelled brooches of mounted racehorses. Low upon his head, a shaggy white beaver hat was squeezed, and his neck was totally devoid of anything bearing the smallest resemblance to a cravat. A snuff-coloured, cut-away coat, light waistcoat, silver drab knee-breeches and gaiters—the latter purposely left unfastened to crease about his ancles and feet, and exhibit a white silk stocking of the finest texture—completed the eccentric costume of one who has long since gone, and left his chair unoccupied.

"Two thou—" the auctioneer caught the offer before it fairly fell from the lips of the speaker—"twenty-one hundred guineas are bid for Sheet Anchor, with his engagements, and he's to be sold," added he.

I remarked that the Jew's restless dark eyes grew brighter, and his cheeks crimsoned more deeply as the competition increased. With his lips pressed together, he looked as if making some secret calculation, and then, with a kind of reluctant resolve, nodded to the tenant of the rostrum.

"And fefty—twenty-one hundred and fefty guineas are bid. Going," cried the auctioneer, lifting his ivory hammer. "Any more?"

There was a pause, a long ominous pause, and men cast wistful, searching glances towards each other; but not a word was spoken.

"Going," repeated the auctioneer, in a manner of mingled blandness and satisfaction, "going," and the ivory hammer rose several degrees as he emphatically delivered the present tense of the well-known verb. "Any more?"

The question, however, met with no response, and after a sufficient time had elapsed for an addition to be made to the last offer, and "Any more?" had frequently been repeated, down came the ivory hammer with a sharp crack upon the desk, and I was sold.

"Your pardon, sir," observed Robert Top, respectfully touching the narrow brim of his hat with a fore-finger, as I re-entered the box after the sale. "Your pardon, sir," repeated he, bringing Toby forward as he spoke; "but this is the cat."

"The vhat?" returned my new, very new owner.

"The cat," rejoined the head of the family of the Tops, holding Toby out at arm's length, and fathoming the lowest depths of an adjacent pocket with a disengaged member.

The Israelite "took stock" of Sir Digby's head groom, from toe to brow, with a slow, deliberate movement, and then, apparently satisfied that no offence was intended, said, "Vhat do you mean?"

"That when meant, and in the humour," responded Robert—and he spoke like one who entertained implicit confidence in his own opinion—"your 'oss can win anything; but like a woman, to see 'm shine the brightest, he must be tickled, not punished. In health, condition, and the money on, with Toby to purr about 'm, and pat his nose, there's nothin' but weight can beat Sheet Anchor."

"You——"

"I did, sir," sharply interrupted Robert. "I was the first to see 'm on the morning he was foaled. I brought 'm up, broke 'm in, saw 'm stripped for the *Cri*terion. It was this hand,"—and the head of the family of the Tops withdrew from the region of his knees a large bony palm, and extended it as he proceeded to conclude the sentence—"that gave 'm the last rub over before he went to the post for the Derby. It was the identical same"—he clenched it tightly as he spoke—"as gave Ned a couple of precious black eyes as he got out o' the scale after the race for the Leger."

My new, very new owner appeared both interested and amused at this stage of the narrative, and, throwing his head

back, laughed right heartily. Robert's gravity, however, was not in the least disturbed by this ebullition of mirth, and he took up the thread of his discourse in a manner and tone amounting almost to solemnity.

"I saw 'm sold at the 'ammer to-day, sir,"—perhaps a small fly or gnat took possession of one of Robert's eyes, for he brushed it hastily with the back of the unoccupied hand—"and makin' up my mind that whosoever bought the 'oss should have the cat—why, here he is."

"Vell, vell," ejaculated my purchaser, "they're old pals, I s'pose."

"Old, true, and tried," replied Robert, and dropping Toby lightly from his arm, he bounded upon the edge of the crib, and began to purr a song of happier hours.

CHAPTER XVI.

BY WHAT I DO I SHOW WHAT I COULD HAVE DONE.

From Tattersall's I was taken to a public training stable in the vicinity of the well-known town of Epsom, and upon the undulated Downs stretching far and wide in the distance—the scene of racing and hawking long centuries ago—I took my daily exercise, and went through precisely the same ordeal as that I hitherto had undergone in preparation for my engagements at Newmarket. I neither disliked my new trainer, nor the lad appointed in the place of Harry Dale; for as far as their attention to my health and comfort was concerned, nothing could exceed the care and kindness I received at their hands. I had lost, however, the familiar faces of those who knew and loved me; and every one and everything around looked strange but Toby. With stoical indifference he appeared to care nothing about the change in our condition, but was ever ready to beguile the time we passed together in play, or drowsily purring, on the edge of the crib, his oft-repeated minstrelsy.

I do not suppose the name by which my attendant was distinguished properly belonged to him; but he answered to that

of "Pippin," and sometimes "Tiny" was prefixed to it. "Tiny Pippin," as the title would convey, was small—indeed, very small—and in addition to this desirable quality for the particular but somewhat crooked path of life it was the rising bubble of his pride to tread, he possessed—as I learned from the first spin he gave me—an excellent seat, a light hand, cool, undaunted courage, and the judgment of far riper years. Nature had cast him in her perfect mould for a jockey, albeit, perhaps, not one remarkable for the development of the beauty of the human form divine. Little and boyish, however, as Tiny Pippin undoubtedly was, and his features bearing the impress of having the light first thrown upon them within the precincts of a stable, still the expression of his clear gray eyes was such as to leave no doubt of reflection being one of the attributes of his mind. Tiny's nose might be called a snub, and his lips plebeian; but he looked a lad habitually given to thinking, and upon one subject—how to ride. It was universally asserted, and as generally believed, that upon the first occasion of his having a mount in colours, such was his enthusiasm, that he went to bed booted and spurred, and, riding the race o'er again in his dreams, cruelly lacerated the legs of a juvenile sharer of his couch in the shadowy struggle on the post. As some are born into this breathing world philosophers, poets, painters, and musicians, so the purpose of Tiny Pippin's coming was equally well defined, to be a prince—of jockeys.

Toby had yawned and stretched in the murky light of an autumn morning, after exhibiting the great patience of his kind in fruitlessly watching for hours the approaches of a mouse's hole bored in a corner of my box, when Tiny Pippin entered at the usual time to begin his kindly offices. I was still comfortably lying upon my straw, and felt for the moment little inclination to be disturbed.

"What! down yet?" said he, observing my position. "Well!" continued Tiny, closing the door with the utmost gentleness, "it isn't because I can't get no rest myself, that I shouldn't let you, my lustre. Lie still, if ye like, an'

take it easy while ye can. That's my advice, an' better I don't know to give, or if I did, you should be the first to have it."

With this friendly remark Tiny Pippin placed his back against the crib, with his elbows resting upon the edge, and, crossing a leg, stood gazing at me, in this negligent position, long and silently.

"I've been put up," at length observed he, "upon a few platters, and won oftener than was expected of me. More than once, ay, or twice either, I picked it out o' the fire, just in the nick o' time to save the fat. I've shown 'm I can ride a bit, and they know it. My weight's a feather, four-stone-three, and at first they didn't like the lead to make up the eight-stone-seven for the Grand Duke Michael Stakes for which you, my lustre, are to go, and I'm—yes, I'm to have the mount. At the Newmarket, First October, next week, I shall scale for my first great event, and if I land ye a winner, what won't they think and say of me?"

Tiny Pippin appeared almost overwhelmed with the pleasurable thought, for he continued repeating, "What won't they think and say of me?" with a mechanical movement of his lips which threatened, if not to become permanent, to occupy, at least, a wearisome space of time. At length, however, he managed to overcome the deep emotion, and proceeded in the disclosure of his knowledge of circumstances affecting our common interests.

"Your owner now, my lustre," resumed Tiny, "isn't a swell as can claim the services of some of our tip-top riders, and not being over pop'lar with the gentlemen o' the turf, why he couldn't manœuvre so as to get what he wanted. The consequence is that rather than have eight-stone-seven up of human flesh without a head, he prefers four-stone-three with one, and the rest in shot. Ha, my lustre!" ejaculated he, "your owner doesn't wear a hooked nose for nothing. Slippery Mo knows the thimble particularly likely to hide the pea."

I now rose leisurely from my caressing bed, and Tiny Pippin at once entered upon the active duties of the morning.

If, unlike my other powers, my memory has not failed, it

was on this very day, but at a later hour, that my new, very new owner, Slippery Mo, as my attendant designated him, paid me a visit, accompanied by my equally new trainer. It may be as well to state at this stage of my narrative, that my first impression of the latter's worldly condition proved unfortunately too correct; he was poor, in doubtful credit, and under heavy pecuniary obligations to Slippery Mo. On the verge of bankruptcy the Jew kept him there, knowing full well that, for some of his purposes to be served, there was nothing like a desperate man.

"He's a nish 'un, Tom Shybird," observed my owner, running his quick, black, snake-like eyes over me; "but I vish by the prophets he'd been i' the copper before I bought him."

"Why so?" inquired Tom Shybird, a lean, cadaverous, bilious-looking little man, twisting a piece of hay in his mouth, and glancing with an habitually nervous manner over a shoulder as he spoke.

"Can't see how I'm to get my monish back," replied Slippery Mo. "He must go for these Michael Stakes; but ve an't got no pull. I daren't stand much on his vinning, and can't get it made vorth vile to scratch or nobble him. Vish he'd been i' the copper before I bought him," and my owner rubbed his dextral ear with a fore-finger, as if the desire caused excessive irritation in that organ.

"With all the dead weight," rejoined my trainer again, looking over a shoulder as if he feared some one might be standing there ready to serve him with a writ, "I think he'll pull through."

"So do I," quickly responded Slippery Mo, "so do I, or I vouldn't start him. But vith even on Clearwell, and only five to four against our horse, vhat can I do in the vay of betting."

"Back him at the odds, and lay against Clearwell," returned Tom Shybird.

"That might do for the Honourable Duckweed Flatman," grinned the Jew, "or the nice young innocent gent of the name of Green we sometimes meet with; but it von't suit this stock. No, no, Tom," continued he with a shrewd, cunning look; "I von't lay a sixpence against Clearwell unless he's got at, and made as safe as if boiled into broth."

"You think him too dangerous, eh?"

"Both run on the square," slowly replied my owner, "and the most made of each, and there's not more than two pounds between 'em."

"But there is that," said Tom Shybird, with the same furtive peep over his shoulders.

"There has been, and may be; but who can hang on to such a close shave as that?" returned Slippery Mo. "Vhy, vun might as vell play pitch and toss vith a fair 'apenny."

The argument appeared to possess considerable influence upon Tom Shybird's mind; for he stood chewing the piece of hay in silence, and momentarily forgot to look for John Doe or Richard Roe.

"I've put on a monkey," continued my new, very new owner, "at the present odds; and vith the stakes, amounting to seven hundred, less fifty for the second horse, ve shall do pretty vell if ve can but pull through. But he'll cost me more than a thousand then. How am I to get that back?"

"He's in the Cesarewitch," remarked Tom Shybird.

"In the Cesarewitch!" repeated the Jew with a sneer. "Yes, he's among the top weights—eight-stone-nine, vith six pound penalty. Vould you advise me to back him?"

"Ha!" ejaculated my trainer, satisfying himself there were none of the Doe and Roe kith and kin too close to be agreeable; "when it comes to the handicaps they stop a good 'oss."

"But they shan't stop mine," rejoined Slippery Mo, with an exulting laugh. "They have now and vill again; but I'll vait my time, and catch 'em on the hop. Yes, yes, Tom; he must run behind in many a bad lot, pull up dead lame, strip as rough as a badger vith the north-east vind in his coat, and break down by-an'-by in a selling stakes, vhere ve'll enter him to be sold for fifty pound. *Then*," continued my new, very new owner emphatically, "ve shall get him in light, and make a certainty of pulling off a good thing."

"The hole will be a deep 'un for some of 'em," remarked Tom Shybird, making sure that Messrs. Doe and Roe, or any representative of that firm, were not just behind him.

"As deep as a vell," added Slippery Mo; "as deep as a vell," repeated he. "But I must have my monish back, and now you know how I'll get it."

"It will take time, though, to work the oracle," observed Tom, deliberately.

"A plague on time, but I know it!" angrily exclaimed the Jew. "I vish by the prophets," and he again rubbed his dextral ear with the point of a fore-finger, "I vish by the prophets he'd been in the copper before I'd bought him."

Soon afterwards, Tom Shybird followed his employer from the box, and I noticed, as he was closing the door, that he suddenly thrust in his head, and looked as if still in fear that Doe or Roe might be detected in some shadowy corner.

Within three or four days from this time I again was on the road to Newmarket under the care and pilotage of my nervous trainer, and ridden by Tiny Pippin. Once more I trod the heath, but, neglected or forgotten, not one of my former friends or admirers came to see me. There was no John Sellusall, no Spankey, no Harry Dale. Alas! alas! When does man's cold selfishness become more apparent than in his treatment of us?

Again, ay, again the pigskin was girthed upon me to meet my rival Clearwell. None engaged in the race appeared but him, and consequently it was reduced to a match between us. With the saddle and shotted saddle-cloths, 4st. 4lb. was ready upon my back, when the remaining part of the assigned weight became added in Tiny Pippin's form, neatly arrayed in blue and white. The course over which we were to contend for the prize was across the Flat, one mile three furlongs and seventy-three yards, and I felt assured that not one as yet had been so well adapted to my powers, although the dead weight I had to carry made me fear that what I hoped to be an advantage was more than balanced by Clearwell having none.

I neither knew nor cared what Tiny's orders were, for as we stood at the post ready for the start, I determined to run the race as I liked, and that was as good as I could make the pace from end to end. For once I resolved to have my own way, for I knew I could overpower my feather.

"Go!" We flew to the signal. For a few yards together, we swept head and head, as we had done before; but getting into my stride, with something perhaps like madness in the effort, I drew away from Clearwell, length by length, and soon made a wide gap between him and me.

Tiny Pippin pulled hard; but in vain. I would be in front, and that too by as far as I could get.

Faster and faster yet I led the way, until more than a score of lengths divided us. Dead and living weight felt as nothing to me. On I rushed amid the raised shouts now just audible from the knot of spectators assembled about the winning-post, "Sheet Anchor! Sheet Anchor wins!" Although I had shaken my rival completely off before reaching the distance, yet I slackened not my speed. Past the chair I sped, amid ringing plaudits for my success; but as I did so, a pang, keen and acute, shot itself upwards from my near fore leg to my brain.

As Tiny Pippin dismounted to go to scale, it was discovered that I had "broken down."

CHAPTER XVII.

MY BREAK DOWN: ITS CAUSES AND CONSEQUENCES.

My new, very new owner had spoken of my breaking down in a selling stake as part of the contemplated scheme for getting me lightly weighted for some great handicap; but he was little prepared for the accident to occur in the shape of a stern reality. This link in the plan was to make me to appear to have broken down, without the calamity having absolutely befallen me. His excessive mortification, therefore, may easily be imagined when the veterinary surgeon, who arrived as soon as I limped back to my stable, informed him, after a careful examination of my leg, that I had met with a most serious injury.

"These flexor tendons," said the veterinary surgeon, one whom Newmarket conceded to be both learned and skilful in the treatment of the many ills and maladies to which we are prone—"these flexor tendons," repeated he, passing a hand

down the back sinews of my limb, "are protected by a sheath of dense cellular substance, to confine them in their assigned place, and to defend them from injury. Between the tendons and the sheath is a mucous fluid to prevent friction, and either over-work or sudden and violent exertion sometimes causes the tendons to press upon the delicate membrane of the sheath, and to rupture the fibres which tie them down. This is the effect of an ordinary accident; but," continued he, with the air of one who has something more important to relate, "it occasionally happens that the tendon itself or the sheath is ruptured; and I am sorry to say in the present case——"

"Vhat!" broke in the Jew, so sharp and loud that, notwithstanding my anguish, I sprang forward with alarm.

"The sheath has given way."

"By the prophets!" ejaculated Slippery Mo, almost frantic at what he heard, "but I vish he'd been in the cat's-meat barrow before I bought him. You big brute!" and he shook a stiff straight whip menacingly at me as he spoke, "but I could cut your very heart out. Vhy couldn't you let the boy hold ye, eh?"

"A dozen couldn't have held him," remarked Tom Shybird. "He came tearing along like a roaring locomotive."

"Yes, the mad devil!" rejoined my new, very new owner. "To vin in that vay, and let everybody see vhat he could do. I shall never get my monish back—never, never."

The inflammation in my leg being very great, the veterinary surgeon at once commenced the task of reducing it, by bleeding me from the toe. This operation he effected by first thinning the sole, and then cutting a groove with the rounded head of a small drawing knife, at the junction of the sole and the crust. As soon as the large vein of the toe became opened, and the blood began to appear, he thrust a small lancet horizontally under the sole, and a clear jet of the crimson current spirted forth in copious quantities. Fomentations of hot water were then applied by Tiny Pippin for an hour at a time, and when he ceased to bathe my aching limb, it was incased in a poultice of linseed-meal. An aperient administered, I was left to feel in

the bitterness of my anguish and solitude—for Toby had been left behind—that not one, perhaps, of the many who might be then exulting over their gains bestowed a single thought of compassion for my ruin, ay, my ruin.

I shall not dwell longer upon the treatment I received for this permanent injury; but merely add that when I quitted Newmarket to return to my training quarters at Epsom, some three months afterwards, I had the straight lines of the cautery branded upon my leg, and although I was no longer lame, yet I knew full well how uncertain must be the result of my first rattling gallop, and how doubtful it must be whether I should ever be able to stand my training again. In the careless but expressive language of grooms and stable-boys, I was "a screw," and none knew it better than myself now.

I was now among the four-year-olds. Had I continued sound, there is no doubt that for the Metropolitan, for which I was nominated, my assigned weight would have been so heavy as to leave but little chance of my being able to carry it in front at the finish. It was patent, however, to the sporting world that I had broken down as badly as I could—that I was thrown for months completely out of work—and that if I saw the post again within the year, it appeared barely possible that I should do so before the close of the season instead of the beginning. The causes influencing the opinions of others doubtless acted upon the mind of the handicapper, and to escape the charge, perhaps, of uselessly placing an acknowledged screw among the top weights, he considerately classed me among the middle ones, and awarded 6st. 12lb. as my burden.

"He's vell in," said my owner, now beginning to lose the right to the title of "new, very new," as he stood in my box reading a long array of names from the "Racing Calendar," comprising the nominations for the Metropolitan: "very vell in, Tom."

"Yes," replied my trainer, making sure of the absence of an objectionable third person, "his weight won't crush him."

"Now, the question is," rejoined Slippery Mo, "vill his leg stand, and can we prepare him in time?"

"If he remains sound," returned Tom Shybird. "I'll send him through the sieve fast enough and fine enough to pull through, and that, too, right handsomely."

"Vell, vell," exclaimed the Jew, rubbing his hands. "If all goes on right, I'll go in for a good stake. I'll get my monish back, Tom, and something more."

I was now set going again, and, to the inexpressible delight of my owner, my condition rapidly improved without any palpable injurious effects to my leg. From slow work I took moderate gallops, and, standing the test in accordance with the hopes of the stable, I proceeded to do strong work, and pulled up after my repeated sweats—to apply a metaphor of Tom Shybird's—as sound as a fish. As may readily be supposed, the report soon became circulated that I stood my rapid preparation well, and from the large amount openly invested upon me by my owner, his intentions became evident of running me honestly to win. From the position of an outsider at the longest odds quoted, I quickly rose to occupy the most prominent place in the betting, three to one being all that could be obtained against me on the Monday before the race, and the books, generally speaking, being closed at that limited figure.

I had returned to my stable after exercise on the day previous to being stripped for this among the earliest of the important prizes of the spring, when both Toby and myself were indeed startled from our propriety at beholding the form of Harry Dale crossing the threshold of the door. My trainer accompanied him, and as they entered I remarked that both were deeply engaged in a conversation carried on in low whispers, and from the earnest expression upon their features, I drew the conclusion that the subject possessed more than common interest to each.

Toby leaped forward and purred, and rubbed himself against the legs of my late attendant as he entered the box; but he took little notice of his caresses, and bestowed not the slightest mark of recognition upon me. There was a change, a great and sad change, in Harry Dale. The exuberance of buoyant, youthful spirits, had given place to a grave and thoughtful

air; and the bright crimson tint of health upon his cheek might, for any appearance to the contrary, have never mantled in it. With quick and anxious eyes he seemed to be watching the effect of his apparently persuasive address to Tom Shybird, who, for a time, telegraphed a dissent to the proposition, whatever it might be, by gently shaking his head.

"You shall stand in," I heard Harry say, almost inaudible as was the tone, "pound for pound."

"Can't depend upon your party," replied my trainer, with a look which conveyed the lurking fear of mistrust in his mind.

"Name yer figger, then," rejoined the young, aspiring member of the ring.

Tom Shybird shook his head for the fiftieth time.

"Will yer make him safe for five hundred?" inquired Harry.

A slight vibratory motion of the head signified that there must be an advance in the price.

"You're *dooced* 'ard," exclaimed my late attendant, in the manner of one who was meeting with a thankless requital for proffered generosity; "*dooced* 'ard."

"If he was not a dangerous one," returned Tom Shybird, seeing that the immediate rear was in accordance with his sensitive desire for safety—"if he was not a dangerous one," repeated he, pointing in the direction of where I stood, "and your party didn't stand against him more than they feel comfortable about, I might be buried at the parish expense before——"

"We'd go to the expense of sending ye to earth in a black carawan and four 'osses," added Harry, laughing. "In course we would," continued he, separating his legs; and his attire bearing a close resemblance to Robert Top's holiday gear, he looked the very prototype of the old stud groom, with Time's hour-glass turned upside down.

"It must be made worth my while to nobble *him*," observed my trainer, impressively, again addressing Harry's attention to the spot where I remained, as I had done before listening to the bargain and sale of a race to be lost.

"Name yer figger," again said Harry Dale, as if in posses-

sion of a discretionary license with "the rest" of the Bank of England.

"Your party's taken liberties with this 'oss," resumed Tom Shybird, looking right and left out of the extreme corners of his eyes, but without turning his head the hundredth part of a barley-corn. "They made sure I couldn't get him fit for the post in time; and as he came into the market looked upon him only as a dead 'un to lay against."

Harry began to blow, but not to whistle, "Oh! dear, what can the matter be? Johnny's so long at the fair."

"You knew the bit of cast steel better than most of 'em," resumed my trainer; "and upon seeing him pull up yesterday morning, after his five-mile spin, found the iron too hot to be pleasant for a good many fingers."

My late attendant blew on, "Oh! dear, what can the matter be?" but uttered not a syllable in reply.

"He can win, if run to win," continued Tom Shybird. "There's not a horse in the race but what he could give seven pounds and a licking."

"But you can't make sure of his blessed leg standing the Metropolitan course," responded Harry, breaking off in the middle of a bar. "Come, come—you can't do that."

"But I can, though," rejoined my trainer confidently. "His trial would have broken him down, if the race—make the running as they like—could do it."

"There may be two opinions concernin' that matter," retorted Harry Dale. "But come, what will ye take to square him? Let's hear the figger; out with it."

The reply was not given in my presence; for with his head bent upon his breast, and turning a piece of hay quickly between his lips, Tom Shybird slowly quitted my box with the appearance of one absorbed in thought. Harry Dale followed closely in his footsteps, and forgot, or was ashamed, to give me even a parting look. The door closed, and I felt the darkness in my heart was becoming deep and deeper still.

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE DRUG.

LIKE a thief in the night, like one whose heart beat fitfully, from the deed of guilt he was about committing, Tom Shybird unlocked the door of my box, and, with a stealthy footfall, approached the spot where I was comfortably stretched upon my bed. It was still dark, and as far as I could judge from the repose I had had, some hours must yet pass before the village cock would rouse the perched partlet by his side.

"I suppose he's down," whispered my trainer; and then adding a single click with his tongue by way of a summons for me to rise, I got upon my fore feet, and sprung from my recumbent position. "Softly," said he, "softly," as if anxious to allay the fear which his early and unexpected visit might occasion.

His outstretched hand first fell upon my neck, and then, passing it gently towards my head, he pressed his fingers across my nose from the off side, and for a few seconds held me to his breast and caressed me. Although not totally devoid of apprehension of some evil, from what I had heard the previous day, yet his manner was so different to an enemy's that I began to hope my suspicion to be groundless, when he suddenly thrust his fingers into my mouth, and I was sensible of something most unpleasant to the taste left within it. The mixture I believe to have been a preparation of bitter aloes and opium, and although I tried to reject as much as possible, yet, mingling quickly with my saliva, I could not prevent swallowing a sufficient quantity to answer the purpose to be served. I was sufficiently drugged to render the winning the race, for which I should be stripped in a few hours, impossible. In the language of the turf, I was "nobbled."

Like one, indeed, whose heart beat fitfully, from the deed of guilt he *had* committed, Tom Shybird crept from my side, and, treading lightly as he went, left me alone to ponder upon the black iniquity of man to man, when professing only to be ruled by the code of honour.

Sick, faint, and drowsy, the poison soon began to do its

work effectually, and by the time that Tiny Pippin came into my box to give me my first early feed on this the important day of going to the post for the Metropolitan, I was standing with my head in the crib, blinking, like Toby, after a long night's ward and watch with heavy eyelids, and spirits that were sunk to zero.

"Strike me all of a heap!" ejaculated Tiny, casting a sharp stable-boy glance over me, "why, what's up now?"

I could readily have informed him, had the power of speech been one of my gifts. The story, however, might have been told a thousand times before, were such as I but in possession of tongues to tell it.

Tiny Pippin stared; Tiny Pippin's cheeks became little less bloodless than a fresh-peeled turnip as he examined me from ear to hock. His breathing, as he continued to gaze in bewildered astonishment, became short and quick; and backing himself up by degrees, step by step, against the wall of my box, Tiny stood depicting the strong outward effects of equally powerful inward causes.

"He's been got at, by ——!" exclaimed he. "Nothing else could have done it—nothing. They'll say *I* did it," continued Tiny, beginning to screw his knuckles into the corners of his eyes. "Ho, yes! in course they will. We can't be out of a robbery like this—never are. The boy must be in it, *in* course. They'll take me afore the beak, and he'll roll his ogles up'ards, and talk of *joo*venile depravity; but because there aint no evidence of the *joo*venile having done what he never didn't, and not so much as never thought on, why the beak 'll tell 'm he's discharged *this* time, but to be amazingly cautious never to show his mug in that justice-room again. Then I shall be dragged afore the swells of the Jockey Club, and each of 'em 'll be so fatherly-like in coming the confession dodge over me. First of all, they'll look me through, and make me feel what lots of fierce eyes looking over stiff chokers can do in that line o' business, partic'larly the swells what have dropped their tin. Then one o' the top sawyers 'll say, like a saint, 'Boy, the first step for you to take, in the disgraceful position in which you have placed yourself, is to tell us the party who instigated you to so

nefarious an act.' They always speak the very same words," said Tiny Pippin, gloomily. "It saves 'em trouble, I suppose. Well, what follows? Why, they badgers me about this *party*. They twist me round, shake me like a dusty rubber, turn me upside down, inside out, and, at last, making nothin' out of nothin', tell me to go about my business."

Tiny Pippin heaved as deep a sigh as was ever drawn from the precincts of the lowest button on the waistcoat of a stable-boy.

"I shall be told to go about my business," resumed he, "but where shall I find it? Every stable 'll be shut against me; nobody 'll give me a mount, and to get a crust I shall have to take to touting. I don't mean to say," continued Tiny, with the knuckles of his fore-fingers acting like centre-bits in the angles of his eyes, "that all touts are innercent turned-off lads, or ever was such; but most of 'em took to the trade from misfortune or somethin' wuss. It's squash now, not pumpkin for me!" added my little attendant and once triumphant jockey, with the tears fairly streaming down his cheeks. "Say what I will, I shan't be believed. The 'oss has been got at, and that's enough for 'em to swear the boy was in the swim. Oh, crikey, what shall I do?"

"Eh?" sharply responded a voice, as Tom Shybird made a hurried appearance. "What's the matter with you, eh?"

"The 'oss, sir," rejoined Tiny, making a vigorous effort to stifle the rising lamentation of his woe; "I think the 'oss, sir——"

"Who the devil asked you to think about the hoss?" passionately interrupted my trainer. "Begin your work, or I'll warm ye with this stick," and in flourishing the one he shook threateningly towards Tiny Pippin, I received—I believe partly from design—a slight but stinging blow upon the quarters. Faint and dull as I was, the pain made me fly as if I had been shot at, and nobody then seeing me for the first time since I was drugged, could have suspected that I was suffering from the enervating effects of the dose.

"Fresh as paint," said Tom Shybird, pretending to be satisfied with the form in which he found me. "Fit to run for a kingdom," continued he; "look alive with him: come, look alive.'

Eagerly I drank down the few go-downs of water which Tiny, stimulated to a sharp movement, soon brought me; but I could not have eaten a single oat of the corn thrown into my crib, had the prize which my trainer mentioned depended upon the accomplishment.

"Off your feed, eh?" observed he, standing close to my head, and narrowly examining my eyes. "Nothing the matter, though—only a little fretful at what's coming off. Knows what's up as well as I do. Mustn't come the artful next time with your mane and plates, old boy, and not let ye into the secret too soon. Now, look alive with him; come, look alive."

Tiny Pippin obeyed the orders with as much vigour and alacrity as he was possessed of, and seemed to be free from an immense load of personal responsibility at the line of policy adopted by his master.

It is unnecessary for me to dwell longer upon my suffering, or the disappointment I caused in losing the Metropolitan. I may add, however, that by the time I was brought out to run there was little, very little, that could be seen by the most experienced eye of anything being amiss. A few remarked that I looked "drawn too fine;" some thought me "anything but in my three-year-old form;" others, that "I had greatly improved, as my running would show;" but, alas! the official report of the race, announcing that "among the first beaten was Sheet Anchor, who walked in last," presented undeniable testimony of the fallacy of this proof. I did my best to go to the front and stay there; but the struggle was indeed in vain. After the first mile I was run to a stand still, and in a white lather I came staggering along amid the ribaldry and jeering laughter of the knowing ones who had laid against me. All seemed to forget, quite forget that upon the same green sward, and not a year since, I had been hailed as the victor of the Derby, and almost worshipped by thousands for my triumph. As I was pulled up, not one, however, came near to solace the beaten favourite; but friendless and alone, I stood with tottering limbs, exhausted, punished, and defeated.

There were a few jokes at Tattersall's on the following

Monday about "the pot boiling over," the only undesirable leaven mingling with them being the general fear that Slippery Mo would fail to enter an appearance. As the head notes in the journals, giving an epitome of the sayings and doings at the Corner, subsequently stated, "towards the close of the afternoon inquiries became more anxious concerning a well-known bookmaker, whose absence, it was intimated at the opening of business, might be reckoned upon with some degree of certainty, a letter having been received from Boulogne bearing his signature. We are sorry to say that the rumour proved too well founded on the production of the document, which was handed round for general perusal, and the contents, if we may judge from the mortified expression of many countenances, appeared to be anything but satisfactory."

I cannot say—neither is it of the slightest importance to the development of the sequel of my history—whether the seizure made by the Sheriff of Surrey, some ten days afterwards, of me and my stable companions came under the definition of a friendly one or otherwise; but large handbills informed the public that a peremptory sale would take place, by virtue of a power vested in that functionary, of my owner's personal estate and effects, among which were described "his horses in training."

Another downward step on the ladder of life: lower and lower still.

CHAPTER XIX.

MY PROVINCIAL TOUR.

Once more the monosyllable "sold," accompanied by the sharp click of the auctioneer's hammer, announced a change of ownership. To a kind of joint-stock company, being divided into six shares of a hundred pounds each, I now belonged, the general management of turning my engagements to the most profitable account resting upon the diplomacy of the "proprietor of a third." A plethoric, low-bred, unpleasant-looking individual was this "proprietor of a third." I cannot imagine for a moment that he was addicted to the human weakness of mourn-

ing for anybody or anything, unless his own immediate interests were affected; but I never saw his flabby, weather-beaten, unbrushed hat without a piece of black crape being twisted round it in a form that looked the exact copy of a hayband adjusted with all practicable negligence. His coarse, animal features, upon which not an expression of one kindly feeling dwelt, revealed the habit, long since begun and continued, of stimulating his system with daily drams of potent drinks. Like most, however, whose means of livelihood are reaped by the whetted edge of their wits, the "proprietor of a third" was in possession of a pair of quick, restless, piercing eyes. There could be little doubt of his boasted qualification of "always keeping a sharp look-out" being an inborn attribute, and one which he had applied to considerable advantage while journeying along the road of life, although, as he invariably admitted by way of extenuation when accused of participating in a questional proceeding, "he had been put in the hole himself." Ah, Jemmy Clever! long ago as it is since we met, I can see ye now with a plump roll of flesh puffed over the mahogany tops of your boots, united by broad pieces of white tape to breeches of coarse material, rather dirty, and very loose. Your waistcoat, partaking of the genuine stable-cut, slightly crossed with the antique, reaches to within some half-dozen inches of your knees, and the blue and orange cravat encircling your thick red neck you obtained on the conventional terms of "a guinea win, nothing lose," when the Chelsea Spider exhibited his more skilful brutality in bruising to a state of pulp the physiognomy of the Whitechapel Pet. In the diction of the sporting world, Jemmy Clever was "at all in the ring," and he supported his recognised position and pride of place by backing men, horses, and dogs for every conceivable undertaking. He owned two moderately good platers; held a fourth of a well-known steeplechase horse; patronised a "novice" who could walk, run, jump, bowl a hoop, and pick up eggs with marvellous speed and dexterity; kept a bull-terrier with a large round head—not dissimilar to his own—and a tail as thin as the stem of a common clay pipe, an object of the greatest envy among the rattling circles from his powers

of disposing of more vermin in several seconds less than any known animal of his weight within the belt of merry England. As a sporting character, Jemmy Clever shone with the effulgence of a planet among the stars of lesser magnitude, and the lustre became greatly augmented upon its becoming known that he was now the ostensible owner of Sheet Anchor.

Although friendless and forgotten, it is far from my desire to make a single enemy; and therefore in stating that, after my sale, I was moved to a fourth-rate training stable, within less than thirty miles of the metropolis, and somewhat notorious for tricks and devices of a truly objectionable kind, I shall not particularise the locality by name. It was a beautiful spot, with hill and dale, slope and level, stretching far away in the distance, and a trout stream, winding its serpentine course through a valley of green pastures, threw back the silvery light reflected upon its surface, as far as the eye could reach. A roadside inn, with the sign of the George and the Dragon, almost effaced by time and the seasons, and creaking harshly upon its rusty hinge, as it swung to and fro in the wind, was situated in front of the long row of buildings forming the stables, the close proximity of which accounted, perhaps, for the strong effluvia of beer and tobacco invariably accompanying the presence of my new attendant, Jack Swiggle. A precocious youth was Jack Swiggle, and a wicked and mischievous one withal. He appeared, indeed, never happy or mentally at rest unless in the active performance of an important something he ought not to do, or committing the equally passive error of leaving undone that which ranked itself among the foremost of his moral obligations. A lean, stunted boy, with a pale and generally begrimed, gin-and-water, pimply countenance, was Jack Swiggle, and among the fixed rules which he observed with unexceptionable strictness, I remarked that he never changed his shirt. About his neck, but not so as to conceal any portion of it, he wore a fiery-red cravat: upon his head a close-fitting cloth cap, the front of which was always pulled down upon his eyebrows: a long-waisted linen jacket, capacious corduroy breeches, with leggings to match, and a more correct portrait of Jack Swiggle

it would be scarcely possible to sketch. Like Robert Top, his favourite attitude was with his legs divided several inches beyond the space his forked fellow-mortals usually allot, when balancing themselves in an upright form, and his hands seemed to possess an equally strong tendency with those of the old stud-groom to fathom the depths of his breeches pockets.

"Well, my rumtyiddy-with-the-froth-on!" exclaimed Jack one day, tickling me as usual under the flank until I lashed out my heels against the boarding of the box with a violence which seemed to please him excessively. "Well, my rumtyiddy-with-the-froth-on!" repeated he, "to-morrow we begin again the rounds to pick up the flats. What a game it is, sure*ly!*" continued Jack; "I win here, you win there; all as nicely squared as a pack o' cards. Sometimes *I* shall be put up, sometimes I shan't; but the thing's always made right with the guv'nor afore-hand. If we're to lose, we're paid for it: if to win, it must be made worth our while, so we go on as pleasant and safe as *pau*sible."

This brief revelation gave me a perfect insight into the plans and practices of Jemmy Clever and his associates. Nearly every event at the provincial meetings to which I was taken was previously arranged by "standing in," dividing the stakes, and making the race a profitable certainty to all concerned. Occasionally a difficulty arose when it was found that a horse would be run on its merits; but this occurred only now and then, and seldom interrupted the harmony of the proceedings.

From a total want of variation of interest in these races, in which I had to play the many parts assigned to me, I shall not enter more fully into the particulars of my tour of the provinces than to state that I went from place to place, accompanied by Jemmy Clever and Jack Swiggle; and my iron-marked face would have told those who knew me in earlier and happier days how spiritless and careworn my taskmasters soon rendered me. Instead of the former fire which glowed in my veins when preparing for the start, I felt the degraded condition to which I had fallen, and began to hate the sight of the flaring yellow jacket in which I was so constantly ridden. This feeling, growing daily stronger, at length caused an unexpected check to the

plans of Jemmy Clever and Company. I was to start for a sweepstakes at the Bath and Somerset meeting, and it was meant that I should win; but to the inexpressible mortification of my backers, I refused to stir from the post, and upon an attempt being made to force me to answer the starter's signal, through the agency of the whip and spur, I deliberately kicked Jack Swiggle from the saddle, and stretched him upon the turf stunned and bleeding.

"Ha, the old blood!" exclaimed a well-remembered voice, "the old blood!" and there was Robert Top, as if time had stood still with him.

I instantly neighed a recognition, and coming to my head, he stroked my neck, and rubbed his cheeks against my nose; but after throwing a searching glance over me, and looking earnestly in my face, I thought the expression of his features became very sad.

"A better was never foaled," said the old stud-groom, and his voice sounded unsteady as he spoke; "but they'r a-butcherin' of yer, lad, as fast as they can; yes, they'r a-butcherin' of yer," and the bright gold horseshoe moved as I had seen it at Tattersall's when I was first offered for public competition.

Amid the brutal execrations of the legs whom I had so effectually foiled, I was led from the spot towards my temporary quarters, and as I walked along the course, I saw Robert Top standing as motionless as a statue, with his gaze riveted upon me. And thus we parted—I know for long, and it may be for ever.

CHAPTER XX.

THE PAINTED BIT.

In consequence of my habitual restiveness at the post, I was no longer to be depended upon either as a certain loser or probable winner. Occasionally, when intended to run in the rear, down I bored my head between my knees, and throwing the entire weight of my body into my jockey's hands, away I rushed with him, and won from end to end in revengeful triumph. Sometimes when Jemmy Clever considered the

interests of the firm would be best served by my winning an event, and all matters had been pleasantly "squared," I took heartfelt pleasure in spoiling the entire arrangement by defying every effort either to persuade or force me to start an inch from the post, and generally concluded the affair by bucking Jack Swiggle clean from the saddle, and sending that tormenting dirty-shirted youth skimming in the hair like an oyster-shell. My bad temper, as it was called, proved a fruitful source of mischief to the designs of the joint-stock company. The expletives which flew from the tongue of "the proprietor of a third" upon such occasions were of a truly awful character; but if his staring, fiery eyeballs, and swollen, purple cheeks, might be received as indicative of the intense state of his feelings, then reasonable is the conjecture that, without such a vent, Jemmy Clever must, like an overcharged balloon, have burst asunder, and possibly collapsed.

"To think," said he, one day when I had returned to my stable, after running away with a race in direct opposition to the intentions of a mournfully disappointed set of "sporting characters;" "to think," repeated Jemmy in a whining tone and manner of extreme prostration of spirit, "that here we've got a hoss as can do anything a'most, and yet"—"the proprietor of a third" expressed a vehement desire that he might then and there be bereft of vitality—"he won't do nothing. It's enough to make a cove wish he'd never had a nearer she relation than an old aunt: that is, he'd never been born."

"I've been put on some rum 'uns," said Jack Swiggle, approaching my head, pail in hand, with great caution; for I made it a rule to threaten that young light of the turf with an exhibition of my natural powers of attack and defence whenever he came near, learning from experience that, in order to keep his propensities to annoy me in check, there was nothing so effective as throwing my ears back, and moving my heels point-blank in the direction of the spot he occupied. "I've been put on and looked after some rum-uns," said my attendant, casting his eyes alternately from my ears to my heels, "but I never was put on or looked after such a varmint afore. As to kicking, I've seen

'im fling four foot 'igher than his 'ed, and if anybody wants to know the quickest way of bein' doubled into the shape of a cocked 'at, why, let 'em look here," and as he spoke he pointed to a part of the boarding of my box, which looked as if a cannon-shot had ripped its way through.

Jack Swiggle, however, neglected to add that the indirect cause of the hole in the wall was the sharp points of a pitchfork with which he thought proper to prick my sides, and goad me almost to madness.

"As to pulling," resumed Jack, examining his employer's face, to learn the impression which the recapitulation of my faults and vices was producing, "as to pulling," repeated he, "one might as well pull at a tree, and a good deal better when he's in the humour to race; but if not, you might set to and spur and cut his live heart out afore he'd move an inch. Never seed such a beggar in all my life."

Jemmy Clever, by way of a prefatory remark, delivered himself of a hope that his eyes might forthwith be debarred from the purpose of guarding their master against a post for the future, "if he knew what was to be done!"

"Sell 'm!" shortly responded Jack Swiggle.

"Sell 'm!" echoed "the proprietor of a third," drawing down the corners of his mouth, which gave a thorough dismal expression to his ill-favoured visage, and, shaking his head, as he spoke, he added the earnest wish that he might instantly be kicked to a place never mentioned to ears polite, "if he knew a sanguinary fool who'd buy me."

"He aint cost yer much," remarked my attendant.

"Aint cost me much!" repeated Jemmy, with a sneer. "What's the odds if he aint cost me a brass button? He aint won me much, has he? *I* don't keep or run hosses to look at, do I?"

"Better get out of 'm, at any price," suggested Jack Swiggle, entertaining a heartfelt dread of me both in and out of the stable.

"Oh, yes!" exclaimed "the proprietor of a third." "*You've* got an eye to your bones: *I* aint."

"But you have to yer rowdy though," rejoined Jack with a familiarity of deliverance which ill-accorded with the usual re-

lation between master and man; "and the longer you keep m," continued he, "the more you'll drop."

"Ha!" ejaculated Jemmy Clever, at the termination of a long-drawn sigh. "What with winning when he ought to ha' lost, and a *loo*sin' when he ought to ha' won, I'll be damn'd if he hasn't put us all nicely in the hole, and *no* mistake!"

"If he was mine," observed Jack Swiggle, "I'd take precious good care he never did it again. There's no sayin' now," continued he, "and never will again, what he'll do or what he won't; and when that's the case with any oss, the sooner he's parted company with the better."

"The proprietor of a third" seemed to make a hidden admission within himself that my attendant's argument possessed considerable force, for he appeared for a few seconds completely silenced. With an irrelative condemnation, however, of some of the most useful members of his body, Jemmy Clever, at length, gave it as a sentiment, discreetly balanced in the scale of reflection, that his policy would be to "have one more go in for the Ladies' Plate at Leicester."

"He's well in," said my ostensible owner, "and if he'll only start, he'll win it."

"Oh!" returned Jack Swiggle, somewhat suddenly, "he's to win the Ladies' Plate at Leicester, is he?"

"The proprietor of a third" gave a slight nod signalling an affirmative.

"Am I to have the mount?" inquired my attendant, and, watching him closely as he spoke, I thought he pourtrayed more than usual interest in the expected reply.

"No," said Jemmy Clever; "the hoss can't run worse when you're on him; so he may run better with a strange cove up."

"'Xactly so," rejoined Jack, carelessly; but I was satisfied of there being deep, very deep, disappointment both in the tone of his voice and manner.

"The stakes aint much, and I shan't back 'm for more than a tenner or two," resumed "the proprietor of a third;" "but, win or lose, they're the last he shall go for on my account."

"And a downy move, too," returned Jack Swiggle. "The

sooner he's out of our division the better, I say—the ill-tempered, wicious brute!"

"Oh, yes, I see!" exclaimed Jemmy Clever. "You've got an eye to your bones; *I* aint;" and with this observation "the proprietor of a third" cleared his bronchial tubes, and rolled his bulky form from the precincts of the stable door.

"I may think o' them bones o' mine," said Jack with a chuckle, upon the departure of his master; "and with good reason, too, considerin' they ache from morning to night from the purls you've given me, you ill-tempered, wicious brute," continued he, shaking his clenched fist, at the same time, however, taking the precaution of backing several feet further from where I stood. "I *do* think o' my precious bones," continued he; "but there's something else I think of more," and he gave a significant tap at the bottom of a pocket in the corduroys, which caused a mixture of copper and silver coin of the realm to chink harmoniously together. "That's the stuff I think of most," soliloquised Jack Swiggle; "the ready; the tin; the rowdy; the pewter; the Californians; the mopusses—that's yer ticket for soup!" and extracting a half-crown from a side pocket in the corduroy, he spun it with a ringing sound high above his head, and, catching it dextrously in the palm of a hand, spat upon the profile of a departed monarch, and returned it to the depths from whence it came.

For a few minutes my attendant ceased to give expression to the hidden sentiments of his bosom, and seemed to be cogitating as a preliminary to so doing. The pause, however, was not of long duration, and he then continued—

"You'll not win the Ladies' Plate at Leicester, let who will be up, and your temper like a hangel's at the post. I and Harry Dale—a reg'lar bricksy-wicksy is Harry Dale!" said he, by way of introducing a parenthesis of admiration—"stand against yer, and we intend to make it a certainty this time. Yes, yes, I'll take care o' that. The cross shan't turn out to be the square for the Ladies' Plate at Leicester, and if the guv'nor's a de*lood*ed fool enough to run yer to win, that's his look out; not mine."

The particular mode in which I was made safe was not then divulged, and finding myself perfectly well on the morning of the race, I began to think Messrs. Dale and Swiggle's tactics must be changed, and that neither my water was to be poisoned, a drug administered, nor my shins purposely bruised, or frogs pricked so as to cause temporary lameness. Alas! I had not yet learned the whole of the means by which the certainties of the turf are carried out.

The hour at length arrived for me to be led out for the Ladies' Plate at Leicester, and as Jack Swiggle came near my head to adjust the bridle, I was sensible of a most unpleasant smell, and still more offensive taste, as he thrúst the bit into my mouth. Nauseous as it was, I champed the steel until the froth dropped from my lips, and swallowing some of the quickly-engendered saliva, immediately experienced a sick, faint feeling which momentarily increased.

"There," said Jack Swiggle, in a whisper, "if yer can run in the form of a winner with a painted bit as a quid, I'll put up with my loss like a lilywhite Christian, and won't swear a morsel."

Like many similar promises, however, Jack Swiggle knew full well that the chance was very small of his being required to exhibit a fulfilment of it. The record of the past informed him that a "painted bit" was one of the deadliest methods of making a horse safe, even at the moment of his being led out for saddling; and, availing himself of it, little indeed might be the hesitation of giving an assurance to "put up with the loss like a lilywhite Christian."

Jack Swiggle knew that he could not lose, because of my incapacity to win.

CHAPTER XXI.

THE FINISH.

As I was and as I am! The downfall, indeed, is great, and yet not more so than too often befals the sequel of other lives than mine. If I reverse the hour-glass, and in my mind's eye watch the sand run through once again, I shall see quite as sor-

rowful changes in others as myself. The young have become old. Despair has trailed on the footsteps of hope; poverty on wealth; misery on happiness; death on ruin. With us, as with our masters, things are ever on the change. Who but those who know little of the world can feel their position safe, ay, even for an hour? While the night succeeds the day, so will sadness gather around joy. While the waters flow and ebb, so will abundance give place to want. While hearts continue to beat, some among us may laugh; but many more must weep.

There were but few more downward steps for me in the ladder of life, and after the additional mortification to Jemmy Clever and Co. in losing the Ladies' Plate at Leicester, little was the let, check, or stop in the descent. Resolved to carry out his pre-determined decision that I should not have an opportunity of endangering more of the capital of the firm, my ostensible owner, "the proprietor of a third," had me offered for public competition immediately after the race, and at a very small sum compared with that which he gave, I again changed masters, and would that I could add the change was for the better.

Samuel Hitchem combined the occupations of horse-dealing, betting, bill-discounting, billiard-playing, selling wine on commission, and was never known to lose at blind hookey, cribbage, or all-fours, to which games he appeared singularly attached. Samuel Hitchem considered himself a "swell cove about town," and was acknowledged by his numerous circle of acquaintance to be fully qualified for the distinction. In exchange for a stamped receipt, specifying the exact sum for which I was purchased, Samuel Hitchem took legal possession of me, with a halter thrown in, and looked as if he had elevated himself in the social scale by—as he called the completion of the business—"buying a bit of blood." I can plainly see the "swell cove" now, with a red, ginger complexion, colourless eyes, and a set of teeth as white and even as a shark's. Around his neck was a white cravat, so stiff and creaseless, that it bore the appearance of having been starched and ironed in its assigned position, and the rest of his costume might have left doubts in the mind of an observing stranger whether it partook more of

the undertaker's than the Methodist parson's. It was a strange attire for "a swell cove about town;" but the respectability of the effect had, on several occasions, proved of considerable advantage to Samuel Hitchem.

To turn me to the profitable side of his ledger, it is almost unnecessary to add, was the primary object of my new owner; but he admitted, without reservation, that "with all the moves he was up, down, and fly to, he didn't clearly see how it was to be done. Every dodge had been tried by Jemmy Clever, and he didn't boast of being a greater rascal than the late 'proprietor of a third.'" Originality of design being totally exhausted in the tricks which had been played with me, I was simply nominated for two or three unimportant races at nearly the close of the season; but refusing to stir an inch from the post for either, Samuel Hitchem, in sacrificing the stakes, confessed to being heartily sick of his bit of blood.

"I'm not going to keep you through the winter," said he, addressing me one morning as I stood in my stall with feelings, I fear, of enmity with the whole world; "I'm not going to keep you through the winter," repeated the swell cove about town, "with oats at forty shillings a quarter, and hay five-punten a load. You won't race, and, just as likely as not, never will again. A steeplechaser you'd never make, and as to carrying a man to hounds, I don't mean to try ye, and, what's worse, may I be hocussed if I know anybody who would. I can't put ye to work," continued Samuel Hitchem, "because you won't do any. I can't sell ye, because nobody 'll buy ye at anything like the figure I was fool enough to give, and as to cutting your throat, why, that can be done any day."

A bright thought, however, like the sudden flash of a meteor, seemed to illume the mirky indecision in my owner's brain.

"That's it!" ejaculated he, rubbing his hands violently together. "I'll get up a raffle and make money of ye after all."

Energy, both mental and physical, was a naturally stamped characteristic of Samuel Hitchem. With him scarcely were the bare outlines of what appeared to be a desirable scheme sketched, than the filling-in followed with all practicable dis-

patch. Barely a fortnight had elapsed from this date when all the numbers in the lottery were disposed of, and upon an appointed evening a jovial, rollicking party met at the sign of the Feathers, to cast the dice for one prize to an infinite number of blanks.

The winner, I believe, expressed a strong fear of having "gained a loss," and appealed, in a facetious manner, to the assembled company for a suggestion as to "what he should do with me?" One said, "I should make a nice, quiet, easy-going cob, for an old gentleman, provided my ears and tail were cropped close." Another thought me "just the thing for a park hack, if an act of parliament could be got, so that I might have the whole of the park to myself." A third considered the cat's-meat barrow my proper destination, and offered a premium for the prime cuts for a litter of thriving tortoise-shell kittens. A fourth, however, intimated that if he "was the unlucky gent as von sich a brute, he'd get out of 'm by putting 'm up again at a lower figger."

I do not know how many times I was raffled for during the night by the jovial, rollicking party met at the sign of the Feathers; but as the flame of gas flaring high above their heads began to lose its brightness in the pale, sickly morning light, struggling through chink and crevice, I was the acknowledged property of an adventurous cabman.

Years have fled.

In the Haymarket I now stand alone, dwelling on the past, without a friend, and without a hope. A drizzling rain is being driven in my face by a bleak, whistling wind, and, drooping my head between my fore legs, I remain spiritless and sad, listening to the sounds of a winter's night. The drunken broil, ribald jests, fierce oaths, loud laughter—the mere mockery of mirth—salute my ears, and while I listen my driver approaches, accompanied by two very young and noisy men. They are talking of Bob somebody as I am driven from the rank to the pavement, and seem to be questioning the quality of the champagne they have been drinking.

"Is this the old screw you have been lying about?" inquires one, jerking his wide-awake hat to an acute angle, and coming

close to my head he stoops down, and, examining my legs, bursts into a roar. "Why, he can scarcely stand!"

"Stand or drop," replies my driver in a decided tone, "when warm he can go fourteen mile an hour."

"Walker!" rejoins the critic.

"I don't know his pedigree, where he came from, or what he's done," resumes my driver. "He's been through too many 'ands, p'raps, for that to be known now; but a better bit of stuff, *I* should say, was never bred."

"Then if so *dave*lish good," returns the sceptic, getting into the cab, "let us see the shortest time he can do it in to the Old Hat at Healing."

My driver, knowing the value of his fare, climbs with alacrity to his seat, and throwing the point of the thong with stinging effect between the collar and saddle of my harness, I leap forward, and whirl the wheels round so that not a spoke can be seen.

The forgotten, worn-out race-horse has told his tale; but at the time of his bringing it to a close, little could be the conjecture that a far more pleasing scene might be truthfully added as "the finish."

There is a wide-spreading chestnut tree in the centre of a paddock, throwing for yards around a deep and sombre shade. The boughs are thicker and taller grown than when an old brood mare stood beneath them with one ear thrown back, and the other pricked, idly switching her flanks with the point of her fine and silky tail. And yet in the same spot, and in the very same posture, stands a horse bearing a close resemblance to that old brood mare.

Within a short distance, with his arms buried to their elbows in the pockets of his breeches, and a badger-pied cap jauntingly placed upon his head so as to show the remaining locks are thin and bleached, a man remains balancing himself with his legs stretched far apart, and his eyes riveted in profound admiration upon the horse.

"The old blood," he remarks, "the old blood!"

Away, across the undulated park, beyond those towering

elms, above which the rooks hoarsely caw and wheel, the crooked chimneys of an imposing mansion sent forth thick columns of black curling smoke. For long, long years, they were but cozy nooks for the owl, the bat, and the jackdaw.

"You didn't win the Leger, my bo-o-oy," observes Robert Top, for it is the head of that distinguished family older grown; "but you could ha' won it," continues he, fondly stroking the neck of the horse. "Sir Digby knew so at the time; *I*"—he taps the button of the white linen jacket just below the gold horseshoe—"knew so: John Sellusall and Ned knew so;" and adding something far from complimentary to the reputation of the last two mentioned individuals, Robert Top makes and attempt to dive his hands deeper still into the pockets of his breeches.

"Knocked out o' time though, as Sir Digby was," resumed he, "*he's* all right now," and as he speaks he jerks the badger-pied cap in the direction of where the crooked chimneys are jetting forth thick columns of black curling smoke. "*You're* all right," continues the head of head grooms, rubbing a cheek against the velvet nose of the horse; "and *I'm* all right. What a blessin' it is to be all right!" exclaims Robert Top, glancing at the clear sky immediately above his head, and piously concluding the sentence by "thanking God for it."

And thus beneath the tree where he was first seen by the side of his dam, we will leave, in the happy, contented sunset of life, SHEET ANCHOR.

THE END.

Woodfall and Kinder, Printers, Milford Lane, Strand, London, W.C.